THE MOTOR-BOAT CLUB ON THE GREAT LAKES

H. IRVING HANCOCK

CHS (97) H

There Was an Upshooting of Flames From the Cottage.

Frontispiece.

The Motor Boat Club on the Great Lakes

OR

The "Flying Dutchman" of the Big Fresh Water

By

H. IRVING HANCOCK

Author of The Motor Boat Club of the Kennebec, The Motor Boat Club at Nantucket, The Motor Boat Club off Long Island, The Motor Boat Club and the Wireless, The Motor Boat Club in Florida, The Motor Boat Club at the Golden Gate, etc., etc.

Illustrated

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The Motor Boat Club on the Great Lakes

CHAPTER I

HANK HAS A BOGEY CHILL

CAPTAIN TOM HALSTEAD stood with one hand resting on the simple mechanism that controlled the bow searchlight of the "Swiftsure."

"Two points port," he called.

"Two port it is," responded Hank Butts briefly from his post at the steering wheel.

"Give us the four-speed, Joe," Tom called through the forward speaking tube.

There was still some distance to run, but the spot was a ticklish one and young Captain Halstead constantly swung the light about, picking up the points that could aid him.

Within two minutes much of the former fast headway had been lost. The racing motor boat was now down to what seemed like little more than headway.

"You can put on more speed, Tom," observed Hank from the wheel.

"I can put on more than thirty miles an hour," smiled Tom, "but I don't want to. There are rocks around here, and the night is black."

"You know every rock around here," grunted Butts.

"As well as I want to," smiled Tom. "A bumping acquaintance isn't desirable. I don't own this boat."

"Humph!" commented Hank.

"It's no use," whispered Ted Dyer. "Tom Halstead is a cautious skipper—when he can spare the time."

"Time? That's just it!" muttered Hank, who appeared to be in almost a bad humor. "This is my supper time."

"Less talk back there, please," sounded Captain Tom's pleasant voice. Amiable as his tone was, the Motor Boat Club boys knew that he meant just what he said. Their talk ceased instantly.

"Point and a half to port!" Tom soon called.

"Point and half it is," agreed Hank.

"Steady!"

"Steady 'tis!"

"Shut off speed, Joe!" called Captain Tom, this time not troubling to use the speaking tube.

Slowly the boat drifted in. Captain Tom shut off the current to the searchlight, calling:

"We don't want the anchor, Ted. Throw it overboard!"

Over went the anchor, the cable paying out fast. The "Swiftsure" came to a halt so gradually that the cessation of speed was not noticed.

Now, around and above the boys towered the rockbound coast of one of the almost innumerable islands of Georgian Bay, that great Canadian inlet from Lake Huron.

"Now, Mr. Butts," spoke Tom jovially, "you will kindly take charge of setting the passengers ashore."

"Passengers?" snorted Hank. "I didn't know we had any aboard."

"I referred to yourself," smiled Tom, as he stepped back beside the wheel. "You were in such a hurry to get in that I knew you must have some choice appointment ashore to-night."

"Whom do you suppose I wanted to see on shore—here?" demanded Hank, grinning in spite of himself. "The butler? The housekeeper or which of the servants?"

"Supper!" called Ted Dyer from below.

"That's the fellow I wanted to meet!" cried Hank joyously.

But Tom, pretending that he had not heard young Butts, called:

"Come along, Joe. You and I will eat first and leave Hank as deck watch."

Hank opened his mouth in mingled amazement and disgust. Yet he did not say a word, for, friends as these youths all were, Tom Halstead was captain, and his orders aboard the craft carried with them the weight of law.

So Hank drew back, and stood leaning against the wheel, until Tom, halting at the fore-companionway steps, looked back and laughed.

"Don't let us torment you too far, Hank. Come along."

Butts straightened up with alacrity. Then, of a sudden, he thrust his hands into the pockets of his pea-jacket and shivered visibly.

"Catching cold?" asked Tom, as he noted his friend's shiver. "Get down below where it's warm."

"Cold—nothing!" spoke up Hank briskly. "What has a sailor to do with colds?"

"But I thought you were shaking," Captain Tom pursued.

"So I was for an instant," Hank Butts admitted. "But it wasn't from the cold. It's a beautiful night on the bay."

"What made you shake, then?"

At this moment they were entering the mess-room, just forward of the galley, and Hank did not answer. At the trim little table, in the compact little mess-room, there were just four seats.

Ted Dyer was now busy putting on dishes from which savory steam arose.

"No steak?" asked Hank in a tone of disappointment, after he had seated himself.

"No," said Ted. "Want one?"

No coal or charcoal fire being allowed aboard this gasoline-propelled boat, it was no question of having a broiling fire in readiness. A switch was turned, the current began to heat the broiler and that was all there was to it.

"Well, I did think that I'd enjoy a steak tonight," Hank admitted. "If it isn't too much trouble."

"No trouble at all," replied Ted good-humoredly, and threw on the switch in the neat little galley next to the mess-room. Then Ted busied himself, for two minutes, with setting out the rest of the meal. Tom and Joe fell to, eating with the appetite of sailors. Then Ted went back, soon returning with a juicy broiled steak.

Within six minutes after they had seated themselves all of the Motor Boat Club boys had made a substantial start on their evening meal.

Tom watched Hank eat.

"I thought, old fellow, you might be coming down with a fever, the way you shook on deck," remarked Captain Halstead.

"Those weren't sick shakes," replied Hank.

"What, then?"

"What I call my bogey chills," replied Hank. "You've seen me have them before this, though not lately."

Tom Halstead now looked genuinely interested.

"Hank," he remarked, "the last time I saw you have a bogey chill trouble followed."

"And big trouble, at that," nodded Engineer Joe Dawson, speaking for the first time since he had seated himself at the table.

"Bogey chills?" asked Ted Dyer, looking up with interest. "What are these spook quakes like, and what do they mean?"

"Just like any other sudden chill," announced Captain Tom. "If you saw Hank having one you might feel like running for the aconite bottle. They stop quickly, though usually they have to, for trouble comes almost at once, and Hank has to be through with his shake in order to have time to attend to the trouble."

Ted glanced at the faces near him, as though to see where the joke came in. All the faces, however, were serious.

"What's the josh?" asked Ted finally.

"There isn't any," replied Tom seriously. "I've been telling you just what happens when Hank has a bogey chill."

"Then why aren't you getting ready to handle

trouble?" asked Ted, only half convinced that they were not making sport of him.

"This may not have been a real bogey chill," Tom replied calmly.

"Yep. Just what it was," Hank asserted.

"Then why don't you do something?" insisted Ted Dyer curiously.

For answer Hank Butts reached for something under the table and held it up to view.

"I guess the trouble is coming, all right," explained Hank. "And it will be here at any minute—but this is my prescription for all trouble that is not of my own starting."

The object that Hank Butts held up to view was an ordinary cast-iron hitching weight, such as is often made fast to the bit-ring of a horse's bridle.

"I guess I've heard of that," laughed Ted Dyer.

"Most likely you have," nodded Hank, with a half-grim smile, as he put the hitching weight back under the table. "If I hadn't had this trouble-soother once upon a time we'd be sailing with a different skipper to-night."

Supper was soon over. Hank withdrew to the galley with Ted, to aid in washing the dishes and making all straight. Tom and Joe headed for the roomy cabin, where they stretched themselves on divan sofas.

"Are you sleepy?" asked Joe, as Captain Tom closed his eyes.

"My eyes are sticky from facing the wind," Halstead answered. "A doze of a few minutes will set them straight."

Tom's heavy breathing was soon heard. Joe settled himself on the other divan, switched on a light overhead and pulled out a book, which he began to read.

It looked like an idle and peaceful night aboard the long, swift motor craft, but appearances are ofttimes deceitful. These four enterprising young members of the Motor Boat Club were not destined to remain undisturbed for very long.

Readers of the previous volumes of this series do not have to be told who the members of the Motor Boat Club are. Our readers are familiar with the first volume in the series, "The Motor Boat Club of the Kennebec," in which the reasons that led to the organization of the club by a Boston broker are fully set forth. On every coast there are seafaring families whose sons, by the time they are sixteen, are wholly capable of handling salt-water craft.

Tom Halstead and Joe Dawson were two such boys, and they formed the nucleus around which the Motor Boat Club was organized. Ab Perkins and Dick Davis were two other Maine boys

from the same village near the mouth of the Kennebec River. Readers of the first volume well remember the exciting series of events through which the first members of the club passed.

In the second volume, "THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB AT NANTUCKET," our readers were made familiar with all the mysteries that surrounded the abduction of the Dunstan heir, and with the circumstances under which Tom and Joe nearly lost their lives in their efforts to be of true service to the man who then employed them. It was during the passing of these rousing events that Jed Prentiss, a native Nantucket boy, proved himself of such sterling worth and fine judgment that he was made a member of the Club. Jed's "bombardment" of a suspicious craft will be recalled with many a hearty laugh.

Hank Butts, the irrepressible, and sometimes dangerous member, was introduced to the reader in the third volume, "THE MOTOR BOAT CLUB OFF LONG ISLAND." This was a narrative of the dancing millions of Wall Street and of the mad doings of plotters who believed it easier to steal others' money than to earn it themselves. Captain Tom Halstead and Engineer Joe Dawson, at this time, showed better than ever, the fine and stern stuff of which they were made. It was on this cruise, too, that Hank Butts ran

afoul of the hitching weight that has made him famous wherever there are American boys.

In "The Motor Boat Club and the Wireless," the fourth volume, the scene shifted to deeper parts of the ocean, with a cruise along the coast that could not be surpassed for the amount of excitement and danger that was crowded into it. Here again Hank distinguished himself with his weight, and with still another weight designed for a gentler occasion. All our readers remember the absorbing mystery that was unfolded in this volume.

The fifth volume, "The Motor Boat Club in Florida," took our readers to the tropics. The adventures of the youngsters in laying the awesome ghost of Alligator Swamp will not soon be forgotten. Nor will it be possible to forget the gently spoken, mild-mannered young fire-eater, Jeff Randolph, the Florida boy, who here joined his fortunes with the Motor Boat Club as a member. Jeff received his "baptism of fire" in the rousing adventures of the Motor Boat Club.

Then the fortunes of the Club took many of the members across the country, to handle a sea-going motor yacht, as told in "The Motor Boat Club at the Golden Gate." Hank, as fate willed it, did not go on that famous cruise on the Pacific Ocean. His duties to his parents

on Long Island kept him at home at that time. Ted Dyer, a San Francisco boy, made his first appearance, and our readers well recall the exciting circumstances under which Dyer came into the Club, and the suspicion with which he was at first naturally regarded. Yet Ted had made good, and was now one of the most loyal members, if it be possible to conceive of any degrees of loyalty among the members of this banner organization of upright, dependable American boys.

After that Pacific cruise Tom Halstead and some of his chums were next heard from down in Texas, where they took an active part in a Mexican revolution, as related in "Uncle Sam's Boys as Lieutenants," in the "Boys of the Army Series."

But now how does it happen that we find our young friends up on the Great Lakes at the beginning of this present summer? In a word, the explanation may be summed up by saying that it was a question mainly of money. Henry Potter, a "big" Chicago speculator, had offered them almost unheard-of pay to run his motor craft, the "Swiftsure," during the summer months. Potter was a man who dealt in millions on 'Change. He was a nervous, excitable man, his small store of health easily broken by any undue excitement or unusual strain. In-

deed, Mr. Potter, who had not yet passed the age of thirty-five, and who had accumulated some twenty million dollars since his eighteenth year, must have died long ago, had it not been for the firm, loving care taken of him by his wife, who was some five years his junior.

Mr. Potter would not quit the mad gambling on 'Change at Chicago. Had he had his own way he would have remained in Chicago through each summer. His wife had prevailed upon him to buy one of the numerous islands in Georgian Bay, which are now used by Americans as summer homes. She had also urged against travel by the usual routes. Hence the broker had bought the "Swiftsure," a hundred and fifteen foot boat, a racer, every line of her, with a beam of only eighteen feet, and capable, under favorable circumstances, of flying through the waters at a speed of more than thirty miles an hour.

It is not a simple matter to handle such a craft at or near her top speed. So, as frequent trips, and fast ones, must be made between Chicago and Georgian Bay, Mr. Potter had secured the services of Captain Tom Halstead, whose reputation he knew as well as did most of the leading motor-boat sportsmen of America.

Captain Tom and his three chums had now been in the employ of the Potters for three

weeks. At this moment the "Swiftsure" lay in the rock-bound little bay that was a part of Penman's Island, the Potter property. Up on the island, which was nearly seventy acres in extent, stood the big, roomy house with its many servants, the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Potter.

The Potters themselves had been left behind in Chicago for the present, but the motor craft had returned to Georgian Bay for the purpose of bringing over the Potter's butler, an Englishman named Crane, at any moment when Mr. Potter should so order by wire.

The reason why the "Swiftsure" had been sent back for the mere purpose of bringing the English butler as its sole passenger, if orders to that effect arrived, was one with which Tom Halstead was not familiar. Nor did he consider it necessary to know any portion of his employer's affairs that did not relate to the care and handling of the "Swiftsure."

While Tom slept, this evening, and Joe studied industriously, Hank and Ted presently went up on deck.

"I don't fancy this job of running an express boat for English servants," murmured Butts, half grumpily.

"It doesn't jar me," smiled Ted Dyer. "My pay is running on."

"But why should such a craft as this make a trip of hundreds of miles merely to gratify the whims of an English butler?" Hank demanded.

"I don't know, I'm sure," Ted answered. "My idea is, however, that if we make the trip with the butler we shall be doing it to gratify the wishes of the man who pays the bills, Mr. Potter."

"What do you think of Potter, anyway?" asked Hank.

"How? As a speculator or as an athlete?" quizzed Ted.

"As an athlete?" snorted Hank. "Boof! He's as much of an athlete as I am a piano-player! No; I meant, how do you like him as a man?"

"He's always pleasant, when he isn't irritable," laughed Ted. "I don't find him a difficult man to get along with. As for Mrs. Potter——"

"Ah, now you're talking!" broke in Hank warmly. "Say, isn't she the finest woman you ever——"

"No," Ted retorted; "that praise goes to my mother. But Mrs. Potter surely is some fine! She's a lady, every inch of her. And she takes such fine care of her fidgety husband."

"Why, I wonder?" pondered Hank.

"Because she's his wife, I imagine, and loves her husband," Ted returned slowly. "Poor woman! What a task her work in life must be for her! If Henry Potter tries to keep at this mad game of gambling in the market for two years more, I'll predict that it kills him. He looked bad when we left him in Chicago."

"Mrs. Potter is magnificent, and Mr. Potter is all right," Hank Butts rambled on. "But that English fellow, with the side whiskers, Crane—he treads on the toes of my nerves! He——"

BANG!

Hank Butts bounced to his feet, his hair rising on end, his cap flying off and an expression of bewilderment on his face.

On shore, straight before the eyes of the boys, a sheet of flame had leaped up. Accompanying it came an explosion so heavy that the ground shook. The shock was perceptible also on the water.

"It—it must have been the servants' cottage!" gasped Hank, his mouth still agape with amazement.

He had no more than spoken when Captain Tom Halstead, uniform cap in hand, came rushing on deck. Joe Dawson was but a few feet behind the young skipper.

"Did the gasoline explode?" asked Tom.

"Not here—maybe over there," replied Hank, pointing shoreward.

At that moment there came a second flash, an upshooting of flames from the ruins of the cottage.

Many excited voices could be heard in the neighboring grounds. Though the night was dark, it was plain that servants were rushing from the big house to what remained of the cottage.

Then, a moment afterward, in the now growing flames, the servants could be seen flocking toward the ruins of the cottage.

"Let's see what we shall see," muttered Captain Tom, stepping over to the searchlight. Switching on the current, Tom turned the electric glare so that it swept the big house, the grounds and the fire.

On the wreck of the cottage Tom let the light remain for several moments.

"My, but that was a complete smash!" gasped Halstead.

"What could have done it?" wondered Joe. "Gas? No; there is no gas plant on the island. The gasoline stock is a quarter of a mile from the house, and on the other side. So——"

"Beg your pardon!" called a voice from the shore. "But Mr. Crane, the butler, sent me down here to say that the electric light is a

nuisance, and that you must shut off that searchlight."

"My compliments to Mr. Crane, the butler," rejoined Tom promptly and loudly, "and inform him that I'm in command of this boat."

"But he objects——"

"That's none of my concern," Captain Tom interrupted coolly.

In a spirit of mischief young Halstead swerved the light so that its fullest rays shone on the face of the messenger, a footman, who stood at the land end of the little landing pier.

"Run right along back," Hank called mockingly, "and tell Mr. Crane that we'll be ashore presently to advise him as to what he ought to do."

"That may not be such a bad idea, either," murmured Tom thoughtfully.

"What?" asked Hank, opening his eyes wider. "To advise the English butler as to what he ought to do?"

"No; but to go ashore."

"The butler might drive us off," smiled Ted Dyer.

"That would be almost within his province, wouldn't it?" laughed Tom. "He's about as much the boss ashore as I am the head on this craft. However, I believe I'll risk his mighty displeasure. Ted, Hank, just drop the boat from

the davits. We'll put ashore and see what's going on. Do you care to go, Joe?"

"Not particularly," replied Dawson, "for you fellows will bring the news back to me, anyway."

In a jiffy the boat had been let down from the davits. Ted dropped over the side into the little craft, picking up the oars. Hank stowed himself in the bow, while Tom Halstead took the tiller.

"Give way, Ted, and we'll run in at the landing pier," directed Tom.

Shortly after the three motor boat boys stepped on land. There was now considerably more illumination, for the cottage was burning briskly and no efforts were being made to extinguish the fire.

"How did it happen?" questioned Tom, appearing suddenly beside Crane, the butler.

"I suppose that's some of your infernal business!" retorted the butler, in his stiffest tone.

"At least, I asked you a proper question, and in a decent way," retorted Tom, with sudden spirit. "Either you'll answer me properly, or I'll show you your place, Crane."

"My place?" demanded the English butler in astonishment.

"Yes; it's on the ground, not far from where you're standing at this moment," Tom insisted

quietly, though there was an ominous flash in his eyes.

"I—I don't understand you," replied Crane.

"You will in about a second, if you don't answer my question," Tom informed him.

"I—I don't remember your question," Crane replied, covertly aware of the fact that young Captain Halstead had clenched his right fist.

"Yes, you do; but I'll repeat the question," Halstead went on. "How did the fire start?"

"How should I know?" demanded the butler.

"Do you know?"

"No, I don't."

"What was it that exploded in the cottage?"

"See here, what do you think you are—a blooming policeman?" quivered the butler.

"It will save time to answer me decently," Tom continued calmly. "What was it in the cottage that exploded?"

"None of your blooming——"

Bump! Tom's fist landed, knocking the butler down. Halstead stood over him, as though ready to send in another blow the instant that the fellow attempted to rise.

"Don't you make any effort to get up," warned Captain Tom, "until you are prepared to answer me respectfully."

"Won't I, though—just!" blazed Crane, making a sudden rush to his feet.

"I told you not to!" cried Tom Halstead, leaping after the fellow.

Whack! The young skipper landed a blow that sent the butler once more to earth.

Tom Halstead was no bully; neither was he a rowdy. He was slow to use his fists at most times, and always good-humored, even in times of dispute. But there was a strong reason for his present conduct, as the reader will soon perceive.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW "FLYING DUTCHMAN"

"NOW, you may get up when you promise decent behavior and respectful answers," warned Skipper Tom, standing over his adversary.

"I'll have the law on you, if I have to!" growled the butler. "Besides, I've men of my own here. Here, you men, jump on that blooming young boat skipper and hold him!"

To this command there was no very ready response. Footmen, groom, gardeners and the like, there were seven men under the butler's orders, and all of them were present. Yet not one of them stepped forward.

"Don't you fellows care for your places?"

roared the butler. "'Did you hear my order? Seize that fellow Halstead!"

"They don't like the job," grinned Hank, "and I don't blame them!"

Butts, himself, would have liked nothing better than to have these servitors interfere on behalf of the butler. Ted Dyer, though never "aching" for fight, was quite ready to acquit himself with credit if a fight started.

"Are you men going to obey orders?" snarled Crane.

"They don't care about soiling themselves with your quarrel. Most of them are decent men," remarked Halstead, as he bent over. Gripping Crane by the collar, he lifted that astonished butler to his feet.

"Now, then, be brisk," commanded Halstead. "What was in the cottage to explode?"

"I—I don't know," stammered the chop-fallen butler.

"Thank you. Are all hands accounted for?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

Then Butler Crane could have bitten his tongue, for that "sir" had slipped past his lips without his intending it.

"I mean," pursued Tom, "are all the servants accounted for? Is there any chance that one or more got caught in the cottage at the time of the explosion?"

"They're all safe," rejoined Crane.

"You've looked the party over?"

"Yes, sir."

Again that involuntary "sir" escaped the butler, causing the fellow to writhe inwardly.

"Then you haven't any idea of the cause of the fire?"

"No."

"Thank you, Crane," said Halstead, letting go the man's collar. "I see you are making no effort to put out the fire. But that's as well, for nothing can save the cottage."

"There was one thing I noticed as surprised me, sir," broke in one of the gardeners.

"Yes, Hawkesleigh? What was that?" asked Tom, turning to the man.

"Hold your tongue, Hawkesleigh," commanded the butler.

"Crane, is there anything you're trying to cover up?" asked Halstead.

"Of course there isn't," Crane denied. "But Hawkesleigh is under *my* orders."

"I don't know that he ought to be," replied Tom. "What was it that you were going to tell me, Hawkesleigh?"

"Hold your tongue, man!" interposed Crane.

"Say when, Tom," begged Hank Butts, slipping up beside the butler, who very promptly side-stepped, though Butts followed him up.

Hawkesleigh, who was a sturdy Briton, with a mind of his own, liked the young motor boat skipper vastly better than he did the butler, so he answered:

"Why, sir, as I ran across the grounds I saw the lights of a small craft making away from here—so it looked."

"What sort of craft?"

"A motor boat, I should say, sir, from the sound."

"Hawkesleigh, you're discharged!" growled the butler.

"Then it can do me no harm to ease my mind," retorted the gardener.

"A motor boat, you say, Hawkesleigh?" Tom went on. "Then it's odd that no one on the 'Swiftsure' heard her engine in these waters."

"It was on the further side, over there, sir," continued the gardener, pointing to the north. "It wasn't a very noisy engine, sir, and I would say, sir, that the high ground of this island must have shut the sound away from you, sir."

"Very likely," nodded Tom. "But why do you think the boat was interested here?"

"Only, sir, that she seemed to be putting out from this island."

It's a matter worth looking into," Tom decided promptly. "Thank you, Hawkesleigh. I'll start investigating at once."

"You will, will you?" demanded Crane, stepping forward. "Not without my leave, boy!"

"Talking to me, Crane?" said Halstead.

"Of course I am."

"Then due regard for your continued good looks will impel you to address me as captain."

"You're under my orders, at present," blurted the butler.

"Oh, am I?" Tom wanted to know. "Explain, if you want to, but be swift about it, for I'm on the run to the landing pier."

"Mr. Potter sent you back to take me over to Chicago at any moment that I decide to go, didn't he?" demanded the butler.

"That's not wholly correct." Tom smiled dryly. "I'm instructed to take you over to Chicago, if I receive the order."

"And that order will come from me," announced Crane pompously.

"If you think so, you're playing with a coming surprise," laughed Tom. "I shall not stir from here, with you as a passenger, until I receive Mr. Potter's order by wire, and addressed to myself personally."

"You're under my orders," Crane insisted, "and you don't know when I may decide to start for Chicago. You'll not take the 'Swiftsure' from her present mooring until I give you the order."

"If you want to see how thoroughly you're wrong," replied Skipper Tom, turning on his heel, "come down to the landing pier and watch what I do."

"Remember then, boy, that you're disobeying my orders," Crane cried hoarsely after him, "and that I shall be sure to report your conduct to Mr. Potter."

Tom didn't reply, but called:

"Don't you want to come with us, Hawkesleigh?"

"Yes, sir," called the gardener, starting after the motor boat boys on the run.

"Come back here, Hawkesleigh!" roared the butler in a rage.

"If you ever had any right to give me orders, Crane, you lost that right when you discharged me," retorted the gardener, and kept on down to the landing pier.

"Take the oars, Hank, and hustle us along," Tom commanded.

Then, after the little craft was under way, Halstead shouted:

"Do you hear me, Joe?"

"Aye, aye!" came from Dawson.

"Start the engine. I want to make a flying get-away!"

"Aye, aye!"

Those in the boat sprang over the side.

"Haul her up to the davits, Ted and Hank," Tom called back, as he raced forward.

"Tune up the capstan, Joe," Tom called down into the engine room.

"Want any help with the anchor, sir?" asked Hawkesleigh, as the anchor cable began to come in.

"Yes; you may give me a hand with the anchor, if you'll be good enough," Captain Tom nodded.

So the anchor was made snug as soon as it came up.

"Boat's fast, sir"—from Hank Butts.

"Then take the wheel, Hank," called Tom, stationing himself by the searchlight and turning on the current. "Slow speed astern, Joe!"

The boat was moving backward by the time that Hank had one hand on the wheel spokes. The engine-room bell sounded the next signal to the engineer. Then Tom, turning off the bow light, ran back and up on to the bridge, where he stood beside Hank and turned on the bridge searchlight.

"Hawkesleigh," called down the young skipper, "will you come under the bridge, where I can talk to you at need?"

By this time the "Swiftsure" was poking her nose out of the bay at six miles an hour. Taking the wheel from Hank, Tom headed the craft

around, steering north. He rang for increased speed. Then, after the momentum of the boat increased, he turned the wheel over to Hank.

"Keep steady to the course, except as you receive orders," he remarked. "Now, Hawkesleigh, show me just the point off which you saw the strange craft."

The gardener pointed as Tom flashed on the powerful searchlight. Next Halstead flashed the light to either side, moving it at a considerable angle.

"There's nothing of the boat order in sight," Tom observed, in a tone of disappointment.

"Any boat of fair speed has had a chance to get six or seven miles away," returned Hank Butts. "Or she may have rounded one of the islands. She may be nearer than we think."

"You'd know the boat if you saw her again, Hawkesleigh?" called down the young skipper.

"I'm sure I would, sir."

"It couldn't have been the Potter market boat?" asked Halstead.

"I hope you don't think, sir, that I'd be fooled by our own market boat," answered Hawkesleigh, in a hurt tone.

The market boat was a broad-beamed cabin motor boat some thirty feet in length. It was a slow, though seaworthy boat, that was used for landing on the Ontario mainland whenever it

became necessary to send there for household supplies.

"You know, sir," Hawkesleigh added, "I've been running that market boat this year."

"I didn't know you understood motor boats," replied Tom, while he continued to keep a look-out ahead.

"I know enough to run the market boat, at any rate," Hawkesleigh replied coolly.

Tom rang for fast speed, which Joe Dawson supplied on the instant. The "Swiftsure," leaping forward, began to churn water with her bow until she settled down to a steady drive of a little more than thirty miles an hour.

Right here there was clear and deep water, though there were several islands not far ahead.

After five minutes of this rushing speed Captain Tom Halstead once more turned on the searchlight.

"I've picked up something ahead," he announced.

"Good," answered Hank, though he himself kept his eyes on wheel and compass, for Tom had given him the course and the rest was up to the young skipper. It is often safer, even close to land, for the helmsman to steer by course rather than risk the half-blinding effect of glancing off into the rays of the searchlight, then back at the wheel again. For Tom was

the one responsible for the proper heading orders.

"It's a boat of some sort," Tom soon declared. "Motor, too, beyond a doubt. She's moving under power, and sending up no smoke."

"A low craft, sir?" Hawkesleigh called up.

"Yes."

"Not more than twenty-five to twenty-eight feet in length?"

"That's the boat," nodded Tom.

"Flush deck forrard, sir?"

"I can't see that end of her yet," laughed the young skipper. "She's a good three miles away, and, if she's trying to run away from us, then it's a stern chase she's leading us."

"But it won't be a long chase," remarked Hank, without looking up.

"Not unless the stranger has more speed than she has shown yet," guessed Halstead. "She doesn't seem to be heading more than nine miles an hour."

"If she's running away, then that's her best speed," observed Hank, "but it's foolish."

"What is?"

"For any nine-mile boat to try to get away from a thirty-miler that's after her!"

"Oh, I don't know," argued Tom. "If the people aboard the other craft know that this is a motor boat then it's fair for the strangers

to figure that we're likely to break our engine down at any moment when traveling at such speed as we're making."

"What?" exploded Hank. "We—break down, with Joe Dawson at the engines?"

"But the other fellows may not know that we have a Joe Dawson in *our* engine room," Tom retorted, pride in his chum ringing in his voice, for Dawson was all engineer and did not believe that a competent man in the engine room had any right to have an engine break oftener than once in twelve months.

Tom now kept the searchlight almost incessantly playing over the low frame of the boat ahead.

"She's a queer-looking craft," muttered Tom.

"How so?" asked Hank.

"Glance up a moment and look at her."

Hank did so, then emitted a low whistle.

"She looks like the phosphorus glow on the water some nights," remarked Butts, and gave a queer little shiver.

"Another bogey chill?" asked Tom, smiling.

"Something of that sort."

"I wonder if our hard luck will be connected with that craft?"

"I think so," nodded Hank, without visible emotion, though young Butts had considerable faith in the prophetic value of his bogey chills.

"What do you make out of the glow that surrounds the other boat, sir?" Hawkesleigh called up.

"It has an unearthly effect. It's different from anything that I ever saw at night under the searchlight," Skipper Tom admitted.

"Look at the water, sir," called Hawkesleigh a minute later.

He pointed to the water that the "Swiftsure's" bows were cutting. The water on either side of the craft sparkled as though millions of tiny stars were dancing there.

"Ugh!" half shivered, half grunted Hank, as he glanced over the sides.

"Ted!" called the skipper.

"Aye, aye, sir!" Dyer answered, showing himself.

"Run astern and see if that glow follows our wake."

"Aye, aye!"

In a few moments Ted was back.

"What do you make of it?"

"I don't know, sir," Ted answered, his voice showing how puzzled he felt. "It's just like the phosphorescence that we've seen on the ocean sometimes, only the points of light are a trifle finer."

"I've noticed the fineness of the points of light, too," Tom assented.

"Only I never heard of that phosphorescent light being seen on the fresh water of these big lakes," Ted added.

"Nor I, either," said Halstead.

Hank Butts shivered so that Tom, standing beside him, felt the motion.

"More bogey chills, Hank?" queried Skipper Tom.

"Yes," responded Hank, though his voice did not betray fear.

"The light on the water is failing, sir," reported Hawkesleigh.

And so it was. In another minute the only glow on the water was a faint one left astern. Ahead lay the darkness and the black water—darkness save where the searchlight picked up objects along the course.

"Are you going to run at full speed between the islands, sir?" questioned Hawkesleigh.

"Yes," nodded Tom. "There's deep water and a clear course."

The low-setting craft ahead was now close to the channel between the islands, but the "Swiftsure" was gaining rapidly, and was due to be up with the stranger the instant that the Twin Islands had been left astern.

"I'll take the bow searchlight, now," mused Tom aloud, and left the bridge, running forward. As he went he called back:

"Hawkesleigh, move a little forward, to pass the orders if I speak low."

Now Halstead turned on the light in the bow searchlight.

"There she goes, right into the channel," muttered Skipper Tom. "By the time she leaves the islands astern we'll be alongside."

So Halstead fell to thinking what he should do as soon as he was alongside the low-lying craft. That those aboard her had been concerned in the explosion and fire at the servants' quarters he did not doubt. It was with this belief in his mind that he had given chase. Yet he had no right to lay alongside and board the craft.

"I'll hail her!" he decided, "and guide myself by the answer to that hail. Yet of course the folks aboard that boat may be wholly above suspicion, and this chase may prove to be a foolish one. However, if I'm not satisfied with the answer to the hail, I can keep the craft in sight until she makes port—if she doesn't stay out too long. But I can't chase indefinitely, for it would be a disgrace not to be ready to up anchor for Chicago the instant that orders come from Mr. Potter."

The quarry was now nearly through the channel, the "Swiftsure" approaching the middle of it. Tom held the searchlight still on, won-

dering at the weird, phosphorescent glow that came from all over the craft.

Then, of a sudden, Tom Halstead's heart jumped up into his throat.

Dead ahead, fairly under the bows, and too late for anything but a miracle of steering to save them, rose the jagged top of a black-looking rock.

"I never knew that was there! Why didn't the searchlight pick it up?"

That flashed through Captain Tom's mind faster than the words could be formed.

A yell of terror from the bridge showed that Hank Butts had seen the top of the rock in the same instant.

There was no time to do anything. The "Swiftsure" was racing at thirty-odd miles an hour, and the rock, when first sighted, was barely seventy-five feet away.

Then the "Swiftsure" struck, head fairly on!

CHAPTER III

A NIGHT FOR THE SHIVERS

CRACKLE! The motor boat, at express speed, showed barely a trace of a shiver. Something rasped under the keel, and then the noise stopped, leaving the "Swiftsure" racing ahead as fast as ever.

Skipper Tom Halstead gripped his hands, the sweat oozing from every pore.

For the moment he forgot the searchlight.

"What was it?" panted Ted Dyer, springing to his young commander's side.

Tom was too dazed to answer.

"That rock must have ripped some of the bottom out," muttered Ted.

"Go below and look for leaks—fast, from stem to stern!" ordered young Halstead.

"And you——?"

"I'm here, still on the chase," replied Captain Halstead, with the air and tone of one who has not roused himself from a nightmare.

"Whatcher going to do?" hailed Hank Butts hoarsely from the bridge.

"Going to see that you handle the wheel like a sane man!" retorted Tom. "Put your wheel over a point to port. . . . Two points more!

Steady! Ease up half a point to starboard. Steady!"

Though he was suffering from the worst case of "rattles" he had ever experienced, Tom Halstead seemed, to those watching him, like the sane, unruffled, hard-headed skipper with whom all sailors like to ship. He stood like a skipper of iron, with no thought save his duty, and no conception of fear.

At this instant the low-lying stranger rounded the island to port and vanished.

"We'll have her within two even minutes!" exulted Tom Halstead, as he swung the light to follow the new course. "Two points to port, Hank! Steady. . . . Now, hard-a-port! Swing her around—steady!"

They had rounded the island, now, and were moving in the wake of the stranger. The stern of the other craft still showed plainly enough to trained sea-going eyes like Tom Halstead's.

Yet what could be the matter with his eyes?

Tom gave a wondering gasp, and rubbed them—then stared again.

Once more in a daze, though with his mind mechanically alert, Skipper Tom Halstead rang the engine-room bell viciously. Almost by leaps the "Swiftsure's" twin propellers were going at half speed, then stopped, next revolved at slow speed astern, until the racing craft was mark-

ing time on the waters—stopped and drifting slowly.

"Wow!" groaned Hank Butts from the bridge.

"O-o-o-o-h!" groaned Hawkesleigh, staring almost like a demented man.

"I can find no sign of a leak below," reported Ted Dyer, reaching deck and rushing forward.

"No matter," retorted Tom Halstead, gruffly. "The absence of a leak, after running over a rock, isn't the strangest thing about it."

Presently Tom was able to steady his voice enough to tell Dyer about the vanishing of the craft.

"She's nowhere ahead," Tom added.

"Did she round the island at the other end and go off on a new course?" puzzled Ted.

"The stranger craft didn't have time," Tom retorted sharply. "Yet look at the rock wall on this side of the island. Certainly the stranger didn't run in to berth or anchorage—there's no place for that."

"Then she went to the bottom," advanced Hank Butts in an awed tone from the bridge.

"That boat was no submarine," Tom retorted with increasing sharpness in his tone, a sharpness that matched his utter bewilderment. "Neither do I believe that she was wrecked and sunk as suddenly as that."

After a moment's dazed effort at thinking Tom suddenly rang the bell for speed ahead.

Joe Dawson had been standing with his head showing at the engine-room hatchway. Now, in a jiffy, Dawson was down at his engines once more, and the "Swiftsure" forged ahead.

Twice Captain Tom Halstead circled the island, but not a trace of the missing craft did he find.

Each time that he passed through the channel he slowed down somewhat, and kept a sharp lookout for that mysterious rock, but he did not again pick it up.

"Well, we've lost that craft, that's sure," grumbled Captain Tom. "Plainly there's no use in trying to pick her up."

"Hey!" propounded Hank Butts, in a half-scared voice. "Could that have been the 'Flying Dutchman'?"

The "Flying Dutchman" is a legendary, ghostly craft, that appears and vanishes close to sailing craft, so the sailors will tell. Let any ship sight the "Flying Dutchman" on a dark night, or in a storm, and that ship and all on board must go to the bottom.

"The 'Flying Dutchman'?" repeated Halstead, with a short laugh. "Nonsense! That was always a piece of silly sea superstition. The 'Flying Dutchman' went to the bottom years

ago with all hands on board. This is the enlightened twentieth century, Hank!"

"All right, then," grunted young Butts, with a shake of his head. "Then *you* account for the missing motor boat."

"I might be satisfied," replied Captain Tom, with a shrug of his shoulders, "if I could account for that rock that we struck, without doing any harm, though I thought I had torn the keel out. We've been back twice and looked, and we can't find that rock anywhere."

Ted Dyer took off his uniform cap, scratching his head.

"It has been one big evening of puzzles," he murmured.

"What do you think of it all, Hawkesleigh?" asked Tom, turning upon the gardener. "You know more about this part of the country than we do."

"All I know, sir," declared the gardener slowly, "is that I don't like the look of things. I'm not sorry that Crane has discharged me. I shan't be sorry to be leaving these parts."

"Man, you're not going to be scared by a little mystery on the water, are you?"

"No-o-o-o, sir," replied Hawkesleigh slowly, "but I'll confess to liking things best that can be explained easiest. To-night's business all looks downright ghost like to me, sir."

"Nonsense!" Tom again declared sharply. "There are no such things as ghosts, and all superstition is bosh."

"What about the rock?" demanded Hank sceptically.

"Maybe I only thought I saw it," replied Tom doubtingly.

"But I thought I saw it, too," retorted Hank. "How about that? Is it likely that we'd both have the same madness of the eyesight at the same moment?"

"I didn't see it, for I wasn't looking that way at the instant," added Hawkesleigh, "but I certainly heard something scrape the whole length of the keel."

"Then if that rock—or what we took to be a rock—was solid enough to make a noise against our keel, it wasn't a ghostly delusion at all," Tom explained triumphantly. "Pshaw! Probably we hit nothing but a floating cask, or a packing case."

"No matter what it was that we ran over, it looked wonderfully like a black, jagged rock," Hank contended stubbornly.

"It surely did," Tom agreed. "However, all we know about it is that it was solid enough to make a noise under our keel, yet ghostly enough not to spring any leak in that same hull. Now, I'm afraid we'll have to let it go at that,

unless chance throws some real information our way."

While this talk was going on the "Swiftsure" all but drifted, just to the southward of the Twin Islands that had been the scene of the mystery.

"The island to the starboard isn't inhabited, is it?" Tom asked the gardener.

"No, sir," Hawkesleigh answered.

"But the one to the port—on the north of which the stranger craft vanished—is?"

"A part of the time, yes, sir," nodded the gardener. "That is to say, sir, Mr. Carson Phillips has a bungalow there. He's out there off and on, leaving only a gardener there sometimes, and bringing over a couple of other servants when he comes himself."

"Is Mr. Phillips there now, Hawkesleigh?" pressed the young skipper.

"I think he is, sir, though he's a man who goes early to bed. When we went by I noticed, sir, that all the lights in the house were out."

"I guess we may as well seek our anchorage," sighed Tom. "It's plain enough that we're not going to be able to find explanations of anything to-night."

"If I'm not making too bold, sir, I'm wondering why you took the trouble to chase that strange craft at all, sir."

"Why?" queried Halstead. "Why, that's plain enough. The servants' cottage on my employer's place was blown up to-night, and fire followed the explosion. When I heard of a strange craft scooting away from the Potter island, and I commanded the only craft fast enough to follow and find out about the stranger, then it looked like my very plain duty to try to overhaul the stranger craft."

"Of course, sir," nodded Hawkesleigh respectfully. The gardener was an excellent and sturdy fellow, though, in common with most English servants, he "knew his place." To a gentleman Hawkesleigh was bound to be most respectful. Now, the captain of a sea-going craft was to be reckoned as belonging somewhere in the gentleman's class. Hence the gardener's respectful attitude toward Tom.

"Ring for the speed, Ted, and take us back," Tom called, sending Dyer to the bridge to relieve Hank Butts.

So the "Swiftsure" started back to find her anchorage, young Captain Halstead feeling very strongly that he had been defeated. In consequence he was somewhat dejected. Had he been able to peer a little into the future, and to know that he would soon have abundant opportunity to go after the mystery in earnest, his spirits would have risen at a bound.

"Had Crane any right to discharge you, Hawkesleigh?" Tom inquired.

"I really don't know, sir," replied the gardener.

"Are you going to wait, and find out Crane's rights in the matter from Mr. Potter?"

"No, sir. I don't care enough about the situation. That man, Crane, makes life pretty bad for all the servants on the place."

"That's what I thought," nodded Tom Halstead. "I've had a notion, all along, that Crane was too ugly a fellow to be trusted."

"Begging your pardon, sir, but was that why you went in to give Crane such a bully good thumping to-night?"

"No, not exactly," laughed Tom. "Crane has for some time been entitled to a few hard raps from me. He has attempted, several times, to deal with me as though I were one of the under servants on the Potter place. He even had the cheek to tell me that he was the steward, and that I had better look to him for my instructions when in port."

"Hang his impudence!" burst from Hawkesleigh. "And did you report Crane, sir, to Mr. Potter?"

"No; I merely told Crane, on a few occasions, to copy my habit of minding my own business. Then I put by a few punches for

him until such time as he should call for them. To-night I paid the account in full."

"I'm glad you did, sir," said the gardener heartily. "You could see where Crane stands with the under servants when he called on them to seize you, sir."

"Hawkesleigh, didn't you tell me that you've been in the habit of running the market boat over to the Canadian shore?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you're handy with motor boats?"

"A bit so, sir."

"I've been looking for the right man to hire aboard this boat. How would you like to try your hand aboard — at the same pay you've been receiving ashore?"

"I'd like it better'n anything in the world, sir," replied Hawkesleigh fervently. Then he added, more soberly:

"But I'm afraid I'll run short, sir, on the matter of references. Crane certainly wouldn't give me any character."

"If he did," laughed Tom Halstead, "the fact would secure your discharge from this boat before you'd been engaged. Then you'd like to ship with me?"

"I'd be delighted, sir."

"Good enough! Come below, then, and I'll show you your berth. You'll find it a bit

crowded, but there's always plenty of air up on deck. In the morning you can go ashore and get your dunnage."

Hawkesleigh's new berth quarters proved to be crowded enough, but the gardener was delighted none the less. He looked upon himself as a fortunate man to be serving under Tom Halstead.

"Joe," called Tom, as he and the new man came on deck, "Hawkesleigh has been hired as a member of the crew. When you get at anchor you'll show him any wiping off or oiling that you want done on the engines."

Joe Dawson nodded in reply.

"May I have a word with you, Captain?" asked Hawkesleigh.

"Certainly," Tom smiled.

"You're highly anxious, sir, to get track of to-night's mystery."

"I'd give a good bit of my pay to solve it."

"Then, sir, did you notice Crane very particularly?"

"I did," replied Tom bluntly, "and it struck me that he knows a good deal more about the explosion and the fire than he wanted to admit."

"That was what I wanted to say, sir."

"All right, then, Hawkesleigh. You suspect that butler chap, and so do I. Watch him when you have the chance. I think it will pay. Don't

go out of your way, however. If you were still Crane's man, I wouldn't try to set you against him, but you've shipped with me, so now you're my man."

"That I am, sir," replied the man simply. "So, if you don't mind, sir, after I've done my work aboard to-night, I'll go ashore until morning. I can move around among the servants, and I may pick up something that'll help to make the explosion clearer."

"That won't be a bad idea," Tom decided. "Yet be careful not to make any move that will stir up bad blood with Crane. I've no right, Hawkesleigh, to start trouble in Mr. Potter's household. The only business that I've any right to mind, remember, is to be found aboard this boat. And that applies to my men."

"Yes, sir."

By the time that the "Swiftsure" rode at anchor in the little bay of Penman's Island, and Hawkesleigh had done the work required of him in the engine room, Tom ordered the small boat lowered.

"You can row me ashore, Hawkesleigh," he said. "I want to step up and look at what's left of the fire."

"And I'll wait at the pier and row you back, sir?"

"Oh, no; I'm not too dignified to row myself back to the 'Swiftsure' when I'm through on shore. As soon as we make fast at the landing pier you just run off on your own business."

"Very good, sir."

Only a sullen glow was left where the servants' cottage had stood. Crane had found accommodations in the main house for the servants. The place appeared deserted as Tom and his new man stepped ashore.

"Good night, sir," said Hawkesleigh, raising his cap.

"Good night. And don't forget what I said about not stirring up unnecessary trouble on shore."

"I won't, sir," and Hawkesleigh was gone.

Tom Halstead, his hands in the pockets of his pea-jacket, started up the slope toward the glowing embers.

"I wonder if Crane really had any guilty part in to-night's queer doings," the young skipper mused.

Had he wheeled to the left, and there come upon Crane, whose eyes were glaring at him from behind a clump of bushes, Skipper Tom Halstead might have wondered much less.

The butler watched Tom's movements stealthily.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN TOM HAS AN ARGUMENT

CAPTAIN TOM walked up to the smouldering remains of the cottage. So far as he could see nothing had been saved from the building. The blaze had been much too brisk for that.

"This will mean a pretty penny out of Mr. Potter's pocket," mused Tom. "But the servants have lost their all, as well, and they can scarcely afford the loss. I suppose the always truthful Crane will tell Mr. Potter that I attacked him and hindered the work of saving anything."

After a while Halstead walked down toward the landing pier again. Butler Crane, still crouching behind the same bushes, narrowly watched the young skipper.

As Tom came nearer, the scowl on Crane's face was not pleasant to see. Just before Tom was even with the bushes the butler drew a revolver from one of his pockets. His hand shook, and he put up the weapon.

"Not now," muttered this strange butler. "A better chance may come later. Shots, now, with all the nerves of the servants on tension, would

bring a crowd here. Although I could shoot, then claim that Halstead had attacked me, and that I had fired in self-defense. Yet that might interfere with bigger plans. I'll let the young scoundrel get by this time."

Entirely unaware of the narrow escape he had had, Skipper Tom kept on his way down to the pier, where he cast off and rowed to the "Swiftsure."

"Anything on shore worth seeing?" Hank Butts inquired.

"Nothing that looks as good as my own bunk," Tom smiled. "And I'm going to it, now."

All hands turned in, leaving no deck watch. Had Tom had a much better idea of the fellow Crane he would have posted a watch, or would have stood it himself.

However, the night passed without any incident aboard the motor boat.

In the early morning, however, Hawkesleigh sat on the landing pier, smoking his pipe and contentedly waiting until a boat should come in from the "Swiftsure."

Crane, too, was an early riser.

"Good morning, my man," hailed the butler.

Hawkesleigh looked, up as the butler came near, but did not offer to speak.

"I said 'good morning,'" scowled Crane.

"I heard you," remarked Hawkesleigh.

"Where were you all night?" asked the butler.

"On the 'Swiftsure' a part of the time," replied the former gardener gruffly.

"And the rest of the time?" pressed Crane.

"Minding my own business, wherever I was," returned Hawkesleigh.

Crane frowned, but pretended not to notice what he termed the other's "insolence."

"By the way, Hawkesleigh, I'll want you around by nine sharp, this morning," continued the butler.

The other man did not waste words on a reply.

"I'm going to send you over to the shore in the market boat," Crane explained.

"Will you be doing of me a favor, Crane?" inquired Hawkesleigh.

"What is it?"

"Jump into the bay and throw spray at yourself until you choke," explained the ex-gardener gruffly.

Crane stared in astonishment.

"Hawkesleigh, aren't you forgetting yourself?" demanded the butler sternly.

"If I do, I won't be forgetting you," retorted the man.

"What do you mean by your insolence?"

"Insolence, is it?" repeated Hawkesleigh, rising and exercising his arms as though he wanted to limber them up.

Crane regarded these motions with some uneasiness.

"See here, Hawkesleigh, you don't want to take too hard what I said to you last night," insisted the butler.

"You were sober, weren't you?" demanded the man.

"Of course," Crane retorted, flushing.

"And you knew what you were a-saying, didn't you?"

"To be sure, but——"

"You discharged me," said Hawkesleigh.

"Well, I—er—pretended to, anyway."

"And I'm no longer taking your orders, Crane. Do you understand?"

"What are you going to do, after this?"

"Captain Halstead has given me a berth on the 'Swiftsure.'"

"He had no right to do that," cried the butler in a rage.

"You'll have to be settling that with the captain. As for me, I'll have no more of your orders, Crane. And if you ever shoot the word 'insolence' at me again I'll put my fist on your nose and push with my whole weight!"

"But see here, Hawkesleigh," protested the

butler, now seriously annoyed, "you're the man that runs the market boat, and I've no other to put in your place."

"Then you shouldn't of discharged me," retorted Hawkesleigh, shrugging his shoulders.

"But won't you run the market boat over for me to-day?" coaxed the butler.

"I will not."

"I—I'll pay you extra, Hawkesleigh. Now, be a good fellow," coaxed Crane, who had most important reasons of his own for wanting to reach the Canadian shore this day.

"I'm under Captain Halstead's orders, now," announced Hawkesleigh, with inward relish. "I'll not raise a finger to help you, Crane—not even if I see you floundering in the water."

"Then I'll have Captain Halstead order you to run the market boat," declared Crane.

"This is your chance, then," called Captain Tom's voice behind them. Halstead had taken the small boat, unnoticed from the shore, and was now rowing in to the landing pier.

"Oh, good morning, Captain," hailed Crane, turning, and trying to look pleasant. "I've just heard that you've taken one of my men."

"He wasn't one of your men when I engaged him," Tom made reply.

"Oh, yes, he was, Captain, for I meant nothing serious by what I said to him last night."

"Hawkesleigh took it seriously, anyway," Halstead smiled. "Be that as it may, he now belongs to my crew."

"But you'll spare him, this forenoon, to run the market boat over to the shore?"

"No," said Tom, with a shake of his head, "I don't believe that I will."

"Then how am I going to get the market boat over to the shore?" demanded Crane.

"I'm sure I don't know," Tom answered easily. "It's none of my business, either. I'm not in command on shore."

"If you don't let me have Hawkesleigh, then you'll have to let me have one of your other men," insisted Crane.

"I have no other men," Halstead rejoined. "Mr. Dawson, Mr. Butts and Mr. Dyer are all berthed as officers of the 'Swiftsure.'"

"But you'll have to loan me one of them, just the same," cried Crane.

"I don't see why I'll have to," Tom made answer. "I don't see, anyway, how I can order an officer of my craft to run the market boat for the benefit of a servant."

"But I'm going myself in the market boat," Crane explained. "I'm not a servant."

"A butler is a head servant, isn't he?" Tom asked, eyeing Crane and smiling.

"I'm the steward here," Crane replied stiffly,

"and just as much of a gentleman as any yacht captain."

"All I know," replied Tom, with an air of finality, "is that Mr. Potter speaks of you as a butler—his butler. You can't have any of my men to run your market boat."

"Mr. Potter will be terribly angry when he hears of this trouble you're causing me," warned Crane.

"Will he?" yawned Tom. "Then he'll be sure to tell me about it himself. Hawkesleigh, do you want to get out to the 'Swiftsure'?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Then jump in. I was the first on deck, and I saw you here, and so came in for you. Take the oars. Good-bye, Crane."

"Then you won't give me Hawkesleigh, nor anyone else, to run the market boat to-day?" called the butler, as the small boat left the pier.

"We've already gone over that," Tom replied coldly.

"You'll hear from this," screamed the butler, shaking his fist, for the boat was now well out in the little bay.

Tom made no answer, nor did he even turn his head.

"Crane's feeling badly sold all around, this morning, sir," ventured Hawkesleigh.

"Yes," nodded Tom. "Perhaps it will teach

him that all human beings are men, and that it pays to treat them as such."

"You're doing all this on my account, sir?" demanded Hawkesleigh, opening his eyes wide.

"Yes, as far as refusing to let Crane have you to run the market boat," Tom admitted.

An hour later, just as Tom, Joe, Ted and Hank came up on deck, leaving Hawkesleigh to clear up in mess-room and galley, Crane rowed alongside in a shore boat.

"Let down the side gangway," called the butler. "I'm coming aboard."

"Are you?" asked Skipper Tom, without stirring.

"Yes; will you let down the gangway?"

"No; I don't care about having you aboard until telegraphic orders reach me from Mr. Potter to that effect."

"I like your impudence!" exploded Crane, in a rage.

"You're welcome," Halstead smiled sweetly. "Any time you want any more of it row out here again."

"What I came to say," fumed Crane, "was that you mustn't leave anchorage to-day. I'm expecting the word from Mr. Potter at any moment."

"If that's all your message," Tom rejoined, "you'll do well to row in out of the way, for

I've got to turn this boat, and it takes a lot of room for seaway."

"I never met quite such an insolent fellow as you are!" growled Crane. "To-day I shall wire Mr. Potter and tell him——"

"Give us a little power on the cable, Joe!" called Tom, cutting the butler short. "Ted, see to stowing the anchor when it comes up."

Dyer called to Hawkesleigh, and the two stood by. Halstead, paying no further heed to the butler alongside, ran to the bridge, where he took the wheel.

The bell rang for slow speed astern, then for slow speed ahead, and the "Swiftsure" behaved splendidly under the guiding hand of her young skipper.

As for Crane, the butler had to take several lusty strokes at the oars to carry himself out of the zone of danger. Then he stood up in the small craft, gazing scowlingly after the racing craft, as the bell clanged again, and the "Swiftsure" stood on out in the bay at high speed, next turning north.

"Whereaway?" asked Hank, lounging up to the bridge.

"Twin Islands," replied Tom. "I'm considering the idea of paying a visit to Carson Phillips, the owner of the island to port."

"Do you suspect that he knows something

about the 'Flying Dutchman' of last night?" queried Butts quickly.

"I don't imagine he has any guilty knowledge of the ghostly craft. But he may very likely have seen that boat before, and he may be able to tell me where she belongs."

"I've an idea of the present address of that craft," yawned Hank.

"What's the address, then?"

"The bottom of Georgian Bay."

"Oho! Then you don't any longer believe that she was a ghostly craft pure and simple," laughed Tom.

"Ghosts don't fit in well with the sunlight," Hank grunted.

"Even the two-o'clock-in-the-morning courage should be proof against that ghostly feeling," smiled Tom.

"Oh, that's all right," retorted Hank, looking rather sheepish. "I noticed that you looked scared, too, last night, when we hit the rock."

"Isn't that the time for a skipper to be scared?"

"I suppose so," nodded Hank. "But see here, when we get to the channel between Twin Islands I want you to stop around there long enough to have a look into the matter of a rock that bobs out of the way when you hit it."

"I certainly intend to look into it," answered

Tom. "I expect to do a whole lot of peeking in the neighborhood of Twin Islands. And there they are, Hank—dead ahead!"

CHAPTER V

A LINE ON MR. BUTLER

"WHAT are you going to do with the boat-hook, Hank?" called Captain Tom from the bridge.

They were running under bare headway into Twin Island Channel, now, and Butts had appeared at the bow with a hook carrying a ten-foot shaft.

"If we find that Dead Man's Rock again," called back Hank, "I'm going to hook into it and haul it alongside."

"I haven't made out a single rock from the bridge," Tom passed down. "Ted, will you come and take the wheel so I can stand here and do some investigating on my own account?"

Dyer reached the bridge at a bound, dropping his hands upon the spokes of the wheel.

"The course?" he asked.

"Due north, in the absence of other orders."

Saying which, Tom Halstead stepped over to the port rail of the bridge. He was trying to locate, in his own mind, the position of that

mysterious and non-dangerous rock of the night before, but Twin Island Channel looked very different under the sunlight from the appearance it had presented some hours earlier with a searchlight cutting the black density of night.

"Let me see," he mused. "To the best of my belief the rock bobbed up in line between that blasted birch at port and the clump of firs on the island to starboard."

The more Tom thought about it the more he was convinced that such was the location. At this point the channel was about a quarter of a mile wide.

Ding! rang the engine-room bell to stop; next the signal for slow speed astern, followed by another "stop."

"Hank, put the boat over the side, and you and Hawkesleigh get out in it. Row between the two shores, and, if you find the ghostly rock, then harpoon it."

Hawkesleigh took the oars and the boat put off, Hank in the bow, alert and holding the boat-hook ready.

An hour was lost here, but Hank could find no trace of the rock. In the meantime, to keep from drifting, the racing motor boat moved slowly back and forth.

At last Skipper Tom sounded the recall on the pneumatic whistle.

"This water must be bewitched," growled Hank, as he came alongside. "It has either swallowed up that rock, or dissolved it."

"My guess," laughed Tom, "is that we were both thinking of rocks last night, and so deluded ourselves into the belief that we'd seen it. Certainly, as far as we can make out, this channel is wholly free of rocks."

"I'll never be satisfied," muttered Hank, "until I have a better explanation of the rock than that. That is, if an explanation is possible."

"There's an explanation for anything and everything that happens in the world," smiled Tom.

"Even that disappearing rock?"

"Even that. Now, take the wheel, Hank."

"Where are you going?"

"To land at the island over at port, if there's a landing place, as there must be. Ring for slow speed. Hawkesleigh, come here. Where is the landing on Mr. Phillips's island?"

"It's on the west side, sir; you can't miss it."

"Go around the north end of the island, then to the west," Tom directed. "Don't try to make the pier, though. We'll lie to and Hawkesleigh will row me ashore in the small boat."

When he found the pier and moved in close

to it, Hank sounded several long blasts on the pneumatic whistle. Out of a grove not far away stepped a well-dressed Englishman of perhaps forty years.

"Are you looking for me?" he hailed, framing his hands about his mouth.

"If you're Mr. Carroll Phillips," Tom answered.

"I have that streak of good or bad fortune," laughed the man ashore.

"Then, sir, with your permission, I'm coming ashore to you."

"By all means," he nodded.

From the landing pier only the top of the Englishman's bungalow was visible, peeping over tree-tops.

"Will you come up to the house, Captain?" inquired Mr. Phillips.

"Thank you, sir," Captain Tom replied, as he scrambled to the pier from the boat. "I do not believe it is going to be necessary to trouble you to that extent. I have merely a few questions to ask you."

"Very good," nodded the Englishman. "As you choose."

Tom's present host was dressed in a lightweight gray woolen suit, with a tam-o-shanter cap of the same cloth, and stood very erect, smiling at the young motor-boat skipper.

"You may have heard, sir, that we had a fire below on Penman's Island last night," Halstead began.

"I saw the flames," nodded Mr. Phillips. "A few hours ago a fisherman sailing by here stopped long enough to tell me the news. You had an explosion, too, I believe."

"Yes," Tom assented.

"However did the thing start?" asked Mr. Phillips.

During this brief conversation Tom Halstead, looking straight into the eyes of the Englishman, concluded that he liked his looks.

"It sounded and acted like a dynamite explosion," Halstead continued.

"Indeed? I did not know that any of our cottagers stored such stuff on their islands," commented Mr. Phillips.

"Nor did I," Tom went on. "In fact, there is no idea as to how the dynamite came to be on Penman's Island. There is a mystery connected with it, and with a motor boat that was seen leaving or passing Penman's Island just after. My object in coming here, sir, was to ask you if you have any knowledge of such a boat."

Tom thereupon described the "Flying Dutchman" of the night before. Carroll Phillips listened with every sign of more than merely polite interest, but shook his head.

"I don't know of any such craft," he replied. "Your description, Captain, is so clear that I should know the craft if I had ever seen it before."

"Have you ever even heard of any such craft?" Tom pressed.

"No."

Then, as though suddenly struck with a recollection, the Englishman resumed more hurriedly:

"Wait a moment, though. Upon my word, I believe I have heard some tale from one or other of the natives of these parts about a strange craft that sails these waters on dark nights and suddenly vanishes right before the eyes of the beholders. Yet I was under the impression that the bugaboo craft was a sail boat; it may have been a motor boat. It was such an absurd tale that I never paid much attention to it."

"Do you recall the names of any of the natives who have seen such a craft?" Tom pressed.

"Let me think. No-o; I do not recall the name of anyone I have heard discussing such a ridiculous boat. You may be able to find some of the natives of this section who can tell you some tales of the 'Flying Dutchman' order. I am sorry that I cannot recall a name."

Something in the expression of Phillips's eyes

looked different now. Halstead was not so sure that he liked his host.

"Then I guess I am at the end of my search for the present," Tom mused aloud.

"How so?"

"My time is so limited that I shall not be able to cruise about, Mr. Phillips, trying to locate some of the natives who may know the 'Flying Dutchman.'"

"That absurd, phantom craft!"

"Not so absurd, sir, to me as to you, Mr. Phillips. Last night I cruised in the wake of that craft."

"And she vanished right before your eyes?" laughed the Englishman.

"Not quite that. She rounded the northern end of your island. We came around a bare two minutes after her, and there was no sign of the boat anywhere."

"It was very dark last night," suggested the Englishman. "Perhaps the rascal took the chance of extinguishing his running lights."

"That wouldn't have done him any good," Tom declared. "We carry a powerful search-light on the 'Swiftsure.'"

"I'm very sorry that I can't help you more than I have done," said the Englishman, hiding a yawn behind one hand.

"I thank you very much, sir. I guess there's

nothing left for me to do but to go back to Penman's Island."

"You are going there direct?" questioned Mr. Phillips.

"Yes, sir."

"I wonder if you would do me the very great favor of taking me over there?" proposed the Englishman. "I have a great fancy to see what is left after last night's fire."

"I'll take you over very gladly," Tom offered. "Yet I'm sorry to say that I can't promise to bring you back. I am awaiting telegraphic orders from the owner, and might have to leave you on Penman's Island."

"That would not inconvenience me," replied Carroll Phillips. "In the course of the day there are many craft passing, and I could hail one."

Tom therefore invited his host into the small boat, and Hawkesleigh rowed them out alongside the "Swiftsure."

As the boat proceeded back through the channel Captain Halstead questioned his passenger about rocks in the channel.

"I never heard of one," replied Mr. Phillips. "Why?"

"We thought we saw one last night," replied Tom.

Hawkesleigh, having nothing to do, lounged

on the forward flush deck. Covertly he studied Phillips's face.

When Skipper Tom returned to his own moorings he directed Hawkesleigh to row Mr. Phillips into the landing pier. Hawkesleigh did so, then returning aboard, went up to Halstead and whispered:

"May I speak with you alone, sir?"

"Follow me to the cabin in a couple of minutes," the young skipper replied.

Hawkesleigh was prompt as to his appointment.

"I've been holding something in, sir," whispered the ex-gardener. "I was afraid I'd burst if I didn't get the words out soon."

"Very good. Talk!"

"Captain Halstead, although I knew about Mr. Phillips, I hadn't ever seen him before to-day. At least, sir, I thought I hadn't."

"Thought you hadn't? What do you mean?"

"The more, sir, that I studied Mr. Phillips's face, the more I knew I had seen him somewhere before."

"That's not strange," smiled Tom.

"No, sir; but it is where I saw him before that's strange. I know now. I saw Mr. Phillips on this island."

"A friend of Mr. Potter's?" asked Tom.

"I don't think so, sir. At any rate, Mr. Pot-

ter was in Chicago when I saw Mr. Phillips over this way. It was midnight, that time when I saw him. I remember, sir, because I had the toothache, and was walking about the grounds trying to forget the pain. I saw Mr. Phillips go up to the house——"

"How did he get to Penman's Island?"

"I don't know that, sir. At the time I didn't think much about it. But Mr. Phillips went up to the house, and before he had time to ring, Crane opened the door, as though he'd been expecting the gentleman."

"And Phillips went inside with Crane?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long did Phillips remain?"

"I don't know that, sir, for at that time I didn't feel any curiosity. This morning, sir, I heard Mr. Phillips say that he wanted to see the remains of the fire. He went by the spot with barely a look at the wreck of the cottage, and kept on straight up to the house. Crane was waiting for him, and they went inside together."

"Then," muttered Tom Halstead darkly, "if Crane is a scoundrel, and has guilty knowledge of last night's doings, Phillips must know, too, and therefore be a rascal. And I ferried Carroll Phillips over to meet his accomplice!"

CHAPTER VI

THE GRISLY "FIND" ASHORE

"I DON'T know that I'd say that, sir," replied Hawkesleigh, looking almost startled. "Mr. Phillips is a gentleman, while Crane is only a servant."

"I wish you would drop some of your English notions, Hawkesleigh," laughed Tom.

"Yes, sir," replied the ex-gardener, looking puzzled.

"One notion you have is that a man who owns valuable property must be a gentleman, and therefore assuredly a much better man than one who works for a living. That isn't always true. But if Crane is a scoundrel, and Phillips is his frequent visitor, then they must have something in common, and both are very likely villains. However, I'm no nearer the truth than I was last night. Why on earth should either Phillips or Crane have any interest in seeing the servants' cottage destroyed. If the explosion and the fire were parts of a crime, then it's a crime that appears to be wholly without a motive."

"Yes, sir," said Hawkesleigh dumbly, for he couldn't follow the quick operations of Halstead's mind.

"Keep your eyes open, Hawkesleigh. You may go on shore and roam about. Perhaps you will see something. I will ask Mr. Dyer to put you ashore. You may be able to find out how long Crane and Phillips remain in consultation, if that's what they're doing."

Stepping out on deck, Tom gave the order to Ted, who took Hawkesleigh ashore, then returned, making the small boat fast alongside.

Tom went back to the cabin, threw himself out at full length on one of the divans, closed his eyes and tried to think his way through the chain of mysteries that he had witnessed.

Yet it was all a puzzle. There appeared to be no sensible answer. The destruction of the cottage, if a crime, appeared to be a wholly senseless one. Yet crafty men rarely commit senseless crimes. It was the remembrance of the "Flying Dutchman" and of the ghostly rock that puzzled the young skipper most of all, and made him feel that here at hand was a first-class mystery, well worthy of being solved.

"And it's one that ought to be solved as a matter of duty to Mr. Potter," Tom Halstead told himself with a good deal of energy, as he rose and went on deck. "Yet I haven't the slightest idea as to where the trail can be taken up now."

Had he been able to look ahead ever so little,

Tom Halstead would have known that he was destined to see the trail again very soon, and that he was to find it bristling with perils.

Joe Dawson was sitting in a deck chair, studying. Hank was fishing over the side, having caught two perch. Ted Dyer was comfortably asleep in a deck chair.

"Aren't you tired of study, Joe?" Tom asked his chum.

"Yes," said Dawson, closing the book, "but there's not a blessed thing to be done aboard. Everything is in order, and I can't even invent any work. Are you going to suggest something that will help to kill time?"

"Let's take a stroll on shore," Halstead proposed.

"All right," and Joe was up in a jiffy. Speedily he had put away his book, and had put on the neat blue yachting coat of the Motor Boat Club, as well as the visored cap to match.

Tom rowed his chum ashore. Tying the boat at the pier, they started toward the grounds.

"Hawkesleigh is on shore, isn't he?" Dawson inquired.

"Yes."

"On pleasure bent?"

"No," Tom whispered. "He's trying to find out what he can about Carroll Phillips's visit to the butler."

Joe looked keenly at his chum.

"Tom, there's something up, isn't there?"

"I think so; but let's not talk about it here. We might be overheard. If there's any mystery afoot on this island we owe it to Mr. Potter to find out the truth. But don't let us speak any more of it just now."

"I wonder when our orders are going to come, calling us to Chicago?" asked Joe aloud, changing the subject.

"Of course it may not happen for some days," Tom replied. "Mr. Potter didn't give me very definite information. Poor man! Instead of being in Chicago, running after millions that he doesn't need, I wish he could be out here cruising on the Great Lakes."

"That would suit Mrs. Potter all right," nodded Joe, as the chums branched off from the road, going through a path of ornamental bushes. "She certainly does hate the speculating life and all that goes with it. Mr. Potter has money enough, but I suppose he can't break himself of the millions fever. If he kept away from Chicago and stopped speculating, I'm afraid it would kill——"

Joe stopped short, staring at the ground in front of him. In the same instant Tom Halstead gave a startled cry, then sank on his knees beside a figure that lay motionless there.

"Hawkesleigh?" gasped Joe.

"And terribly hurt, too," breathed Tom Halstead, gazing at the cut on the man's head and the clotted blood there.

"He's been killed!" cried Joe.

"Not quite," replied Tom Halstead, feeling for the man's pulse. "There's some action here, but one can't guess how much longer the poor fellow will remain alive."

"Stay with him," panted Joe. "I'll alarm the house."

"Run down to the landing and get Hank and Ted ashore first," Tom ordered briskly.

So Joe Dawson started on the latter errand, making his feet travel fast over the ground. Rowing furiously, Joe reached the boat, roused his mates and came back with them. All three reached the gruesome spot on the run.

"What dastardly work is this?" gasped Ted.

"I can't say," Tom replied. "But I can't rouse Hawkesleigh, though, to be sure, I haven't tried anything but gentle means. Hurry up to the house, one of you, and give the alarm."

Ted made for the house on a fast run. Joe knelt beside his chum.

"This must be some of Crane's work," Dawson whispered.

"Either his or Phillips's," Tom assented.

"Phillips?" repeated Joe. "He would hardly

do such a thing. He looks like a decent enough fellow."

"He's Crane's friend, isn't he?" Tom demanded. "Now, what do you conclude when a seeming English gentleman picks out a butler for a companion?"

"Hadn't I better get some water and wash that cut?" broke in Hank Butts.

"No; for I'm going to have poor Hawkesleigh taken down to the boat. There we can attend to him much better. We have antiseptics in the medicine chest."

"What are you waiting for?" Hank wanted to know.

"To look into this crime," Tom Halstead answered. "It's plain enough that Hawkesleigh didn't get any such cut from a fall. He was struck. I want to see how Crane and his 'gentleman' friend look and act when they see this poor fellow. Then, as soon as possible, we'll get Hawkesleigh aboard the 'Swiftsure' and take him where he can have skilled medical attention."

From the big house half a dozen servants came running down the slope. Two of these were women.

"Where's Crane?" called Captain Halstead.

"He's coming, in a moment," Ted called.

Both Tom and Joe covertly watched the serv-

ants as they crowded around the unconscious man. Every one of these people, however, seemed to feel genuine sympathy for the stricken man.

Then came Crane on the run, a look of horror on his face that struck the young skipper as being none too genuine.

"My, my, but this is horrible!" cried Crane, as he reached the spot. "How did it happen?"

"That is what I wanted to ask you, Crane," Halstead replied, looking the fellow straight in the eyes.

"What do I know about this dreadful matter?" demanded Crane, flushing, then paling, under Captain Halstead's steady gaze.

"Don't you know anything about it?" Tom insisted.

"Of course I don't."

"Does Mr. Phillips know?" Tom shot out.

Crane gave an almost imperceptible start, then rejoined:

"How should Mr. Phillips know anything about it?"

"He's visiting you, isn't he?" Halstead demanded.

"Visiting me? No."

"Mr. Phillips went up to the house, and you received him," Tom thrust back.

"How do you know that?" Crane cried. Then,

realizing that he had made an unwise retort, the butler hastened to say:

"Mr. Phillips came only to ask some questions about when Mr. and Mrs. Potter would return. He's been gone for an hour."

"How did he get off the island?" asked Tom.

"He said he'd hail some passing boat," Crane explained.

"Then you don't really know that he has left the island?"

"Yes—no—that is, I think he must have done so."

"Crane," charged Tom bluntly, "you're lying. Some day I'll be able to prove it to you."

A more honest man might have colored with anger, then possibly have turned pale. Crane did these things, but in the opposite order. The fellow fairly squirmed as he realized that the eyes of all of the Motor Boat Club boys were turned on him accusingly.

"Have a care what you say to me, Halstead," screamed the butler.

"All right, then; for the present I will," nodded Tom grimly. "I mustn't allow poor Hawkesleigh to be neglected any longer. Where is the nearest physician to be found?"

"Dr. Carter, over at Fowler's Island," replied the butler.

"Is that true?" asked Halstead, appealing to the other servants. They assured him that it was.

"Then one of you men go up to the house and get a cot," Halstead directed. "We'll lift Hawkesleigh on to it and get him aboard the 'Swiftsure' as soon as the thing can be done."

Two of the men servants started off at a run. Crane opened his mouth as though to countermand the order, but, thinking better of it, bit his lips.

The cot was brought, and on it Hawkesleigh was placed gently. Hardest of all was conveying the man and cot out to the yacht in the small boat, but even this was managed.

"We'll carry him down into the cabin," Tom decided. "Joe, you run to the engine room. Hank, you and Ted get up the anchor. Then Hank can take the wheel and Ted can come back here to me. When you get out into deep water, Hank, let the engine do all Joe can make it do. Burn up the miles! Hawkesleigh's life may be the reward of speed!"

Two and a half minutes later the twin propellers began to move, the "Swiftsure" turning her nose around and starting on her journey.

Hank rang for higher speed. The race for a life was on!

CHAPTER VII

SOMEWHAT OF A PUZZLE

WITH such speed as Joe could supply, and with Hank, on the bridge, steering the most direct course possible, it was not long ere the "Swiftsure" ceased her headway off Fowler's Island.

Five long blasts of the pneumatic whistle brought signs of life up at the cottage on a grassy slope.

"Is Dr. Carter there?" bawled Tom through the megaphone.

A man servant nodded assent.

"Then ask Dr. Carter to bring his surgical kit on the jump! We have a bad case on board."

By this time the small boat had been lowered, and Ted cast off, to row to shore and bring off the medical man.

Dr. Carter, when he appeared, proved to be a man of nearly seventy. He carried a log cabin bag in either hand as he hurried down to the water front.

"What's up, young man?" demanded the physician, as he reached his own pier. "Someone hurt in the machinery?"

"It looks more like a murder," Ted replied, as he helped the old man into the boat, then picked up the oars.

Dr. Carter asked no more questions until he found himself in the "Swiftsure's" cabin beside unconscious Hawkesleigh.

"Is the man going to die?" Tom asked.

"The chances are that he is," replied Dr. Carter, after a brief examination. "How did this happen?"

"We don't know, sir. All we do know is that we suspect foul play. What is the best possible chance for saving this man — of pulling him through?"

"Hospital," returned the doctor concisely.

"Where's the nearest one?"

"At Laketon, on the Canadian shore. Do you know where that is?"

"Yes, sir; twenty-five miles from here."

"Right," nodded Dr. Carter. "How long will it take you to get there, Captain?"

"Less than an hour."

"You've a swift boat, then," remarked the old man, opening his eyes.

"Thank goodness we have. Doctor, you'll go through to Laketon with us, won't you?"

"Yes; on condition that you bring me back here. Be good enough to megaphone my people up at the cottage."

Ted Dyer departed on that errand. Hank went to the bridge, Joe back to the engine room, and the craft was soon under way at top speed.

Dr. Carter took off his coat, which he folded carefully and laid over a divan. His vest followed, then his tie, collar and cuffs. He rolled up his sleeves with a thoughtful air, then opened one of his log cabin bags.

"One of you young men will stay with me?" he asked.

"I will," answered Tom Halstead. "Hank, slip into the chart-room and make sure you know the course to Laketon. Then hit it up for all the speed there is in this craft."

Hawkesleigh did not regain consciousness during the trip, though he was still alive. Dr. Carter was obliged to give stimulants by means of the hypodermic syringe.

"It looks like a bad job, Captain," commented the medical man. "I doubt very much if our man is ever going to know that he was struck down. Of course my prediction applies to this world only, for I don't know what he'll know in the next world."

Ted Dyer came in to report:

"We're nearing Laketon, Captain. Shall we anchor or tie up to a dock?"

"Dock, by all means, if you can," ordered Tom. "I'll go on deck, too."

The "Swiftsure" was still traveling at top speed, making such a fine exhibition of herself that a crowd was gathering along the water front.

Some of the more eager ones ran to the dock for which it could be seen that the motor craft was heading.

Tom did not take the wheel, but gave his orders. Speed was slowed down, then stopped. Finally the propellers began to churn astern. Under her headway the "Swiftsure" swept in to her intended berth, bow on.

As the graceful craft neared her landing the crowd began to cheer at this fine sample of boat handling.

"Don't make a noise, friends!" called Tom, raising a hand. "We have a very sick man on board."

That silenced the crowd in an instant. The bow of the boat went in close enough for Ted to leap ashore with the bow-line. Next, with the help of the propellers, the stern was warped in.

There was no ambulance service connected with the little hospital, but a dray was secured, and on to this the cot and its unconscious occupant were loaded.

"I'll stay here," proposed Dr. Carter. "They won't need me at the hospital."

Halstead and Joe Dawson rode on the dray with the injured man. In a few minutes the hospital was reached.

"There doesn't appear to be much chance for this man," said the house surgeon, when the cot had been set down in the receiving room.

"So I've already been told by a physician," replied Tom, taking out his cardcase. "However I want you to do everything within your power to bring this poor fellow back to life and health. Forward your account to me, Penman's Island. I'll pay down whatever you wish before leaving. Wire me every day, until further orders, the condition of the patient."

Tom delayed in the office long enough to make a payment on account for Hawkesleigh's treatment, then he and Joe hurried outside.

"What are you waiting for?" asked Joe, when his chum halted, with an undecided air, outside.

"I'm wondering," Tom replied.

"What?"

"Where the police station is here."

"Why?"

"A report of this affair should be made to the police."

"That's so," nodded Joe Dawson. "And that means trouble, doesn't it?"

"How so?"

"The police will visit Penman's Island. They'll investigate, and it looks as if they could do but one thing—arrest Crane."

"That wouldn't break me up," retorted Halstead, with a grim smile.

"I imagine not," smiled Joe in return. "And there's not a doubt but that Crane deserves to be arrested, even on general principles alone. But Crane is awaiting telegraphic orders to join Mr. Potter in Chicago. Our belief is that Crane will take to Mr. Potter something vitally important. Crane's failure to obey Mr. Potter's orders might result in a whopping big loss to our employer. Have we any right to start anything that might mean a great loss to Mr. Potter?"

CHAPTER VIII

UNDER NEW CRUISING ORDERS

"WHEW!" gasped young Captain Halstead. "That is something of a dilemma, isn't it?"

"Yes. What are we going to do?"

Skipper Tom stood there in a brown study for a few moments. Then he stepped forward, resolutely.

"No matter what happens, there's only one

thing that we can do, Joe. A serious crime has been committed—perhaps a fatal one. We have knowledge of that crime. If we help to conceal a crime from the police, even for a brief time, doesn't that make us legally parties to that crime? I think it does. Every decent fellow should have a firm respect for the law. We haven't any choice, Joe. We must go to the police station."

After some inquiry they found it. Inspector Bonner heard their brief statement, then called two of his policemen. First a visit was made to the hospital. Then the police followed the Motor Boat Club boys down to the dock.

As soon as the boat was under way the inspector called Tom aside.

"If you can be spared from the deck, Captain, I would like to speak apart with you and with the medical man."

So the three closeted themselves in the cabin. Dr. Carter described the nature of Hawkesleigh's injury, adding that he believed the luckless man had received a fatal fracture of the skull.

Then Mr. Bonner keenly questioned the young captain, drawing out the story of all that had gone on at Penman's Island during the last twenty-four hours.

"Then there was trouble between Crane, the

butler, and the injured man?'' demanded Mr. Bonner.

''Yes,'' Tom admitted.

''Have you any reason to feel that Crane committed this serious assault?''

''That was my impression at first,'' Tom admitted. ''But, since then, I have been asking myself why Crane should feel enough resentment to goad him on to what might turn out to be murder.''

''Is Crane a drinking man?''

''I have never seen anything about him, Mr. Inspector, to suggest such an idea.''

''Is Crane a man given to violent, inflamed, unreasonable tempers?''

''I'd rather call him a sulky man,'' Halstead returned slowly.

''Is the butler what you'd call a bad man—a man of deadly impulses?''

''I can't say so from anything I've seen of him,'' Halstead answered promptly. ''I'd call him more quarrelsome than dangerous.''

''That's an excellent distinction, Captain Halstead,'' nodded the inspector approvingly. ''A quarrelsome man is seldom dangerous. He merely blusters in the effort to make others believe him dangerous.''

''Fowler's Island half a mile away,'' called Ted, outside, after rapping on the cabin door.

"I've asked about all the questions I can until I've visited the scene of the crime," said Inspector Bonner, rising. "I thank you, doctor, and won't detain you longer."

Tom thereupon asked the physician to name his fee and paid it. Dr. Carter, after receiving the young skipper's hearty thanks, was put ashore. After that the "Swiftsure" made a quick trip to Penman's Island. Inspector Bonner and his policemen were put ashore, Tom Halstead accompanying them.

First the spot where Hawkesleigh had been found was visited. They were perceived from the house, and the servants came flocking down. Last of all came Butler Crane, very stiff and pompous.

"Crane, you and the injured man had some hard words last night?" asked the inspector suddenly.

"Nothing much," returned the butler. "I discharged him—that was all."

"Did Hawkesleigh threaten you, Crane?"

"No, inspector."

"Did you threaten him?"

"No."

"For what purpose did Mr. Carroll Phillips visit you to-day?"

Crane started, then replied in a low voice:

"Inspector, I don't care to discuss that mat-

ter before this crowd. I'll answer your questions in private."

"Do you object to Captain Halstead going with us?"

"Very much indeed, sir," replied the butler. "In fact, I won't talk before him."

"I won't intrude," said Tom, turning. "Inspector, you'll find me on the 'Swiftsure' whenever you want me."

Whatever the butler told the inspector regarding Phillips's visit was not destined to reach the ears of the Motor Boat Club boys immediately, for English police officials do not usually make public all their information.

It was some two hours later when the inspector and one of his policemen returned and signaled the "Swiftsure."

"Take the boat ashore, Ted, and bring them back," directed Captain Halstead.

"I've done all that I can, for the present, in the investigation," announced the inspector, as he stepped to the "Swiftsure's" deck and was met by Skipper Tom. "I'm leaving one of my men behind."

"Then you've made an arrest?" queried Halstead.

"Oh, dear me, no," replied the inspector, at the same time raising his eyebrows as though to show surprise at being questioned.

"You've a suspect on the island, anyway?" Tom pressed.

"I can't say that, Captain," replied the inspector composedly.

"Then you have no idea as to who committed the assault?"

"If I have," smiled the Canadian police official, "it will appear duly in my report to my superiors."

"Thank you, most heartily, for all your information," laughed Tom Halstead.

"My dear young Captain," observed the inspector in mild surprise, "you surely didn't expect me to unbosom myself?"

"I don't—now," admitted Tom. "You see, I'm an American, and you are somewhat different from our officials. When a serious crime has been committed our policemen like to look important, and then presently they talk a little."

"It is forbidden in our service," replied the inspector simply. "Besides, my dear young Captain, how can one be certain that any crime has been committed here? It is quite possible that the man Hawkesleigh may have fallen from some high place, and have gashed his head on a rock or a stone."

"There wasn't anything of that description where we found him," Tom replied. "I made

a hunt for such a rock or stone when we found the man."

"But there are several rocky places on the island," replied Inspector Bonner. "Hawkesleigh may have fallen. Then, in a dazed condition, he may have wandered about, instinctively seeking help, until he fell. Don't you see?"

"That's really a very wonderful explanation," cried Tom, with feigned enthusiasm.

"Oh, yes; all such possibilities are very easily discovered when one brings his powers of mind to bear on a case," replied Inspector Bonner, with a satisfied smile.

"There's one thing I'd like to ask you about," Tom went on.

"But dear me," objected the inspector, "I have already told you that I am not allowed to give information, except to my superior officers."

"What I want to ask you," Skipper Halstead insisted, "is in the way of instructions."

"I fear I don't comprehend you," murmured the police official.

"Of course you don't, for I haven't explained yet," Halstead continued. "You see I am awaiting orders from my employer. Whenever he so directs I am to take one of his employés now on the island and sail with all

haste to Chicago. As a police official, have you any objection to my taking him from the island and conveying him to Chicago?"

"Bless my soul, no!" cried the inspector. "Why should I? Of course, if any reason for such objection arose, then the policeman whom I am leaving behind would make the objection known."

"Thank you," said Tom. "Now, Inspector, can I offer you and your companion luncheon in the cabin?"

"Captain, I thank you, but Crane has already seen to it that we had a most excellent repast. However, Crane was kind enough to say that you would convey me back to Laketon."

"Then Crane altogether exceeded his powers," Halstead rejoined. "He has not the slightest right to send me any instructions. Yet, Mr. Inspector, I shall be most glad to make the offer myself. Do you wish to go back to Laketon at once?"

"If that will be convenient to you, Captain."

"Wholly," Tom replied. "Mr. Dyer will show you the cabin, and also the deck chairs aft. Please make yourselves comfortable, and, if there is anything you wish, kindly let me know."

Ted took the visitors aft, then returned, and

the anchor was raised. Within three minutes the "Swiftsure" was on her way back to Laketon.

As Tom stepped up on the bridge, Hank Butts met him with a grin.

"That inspector is a foxy fellow, isn't he?" Butts asked. "He wouldn't tell you a word of his police business, yet, under your questioning, he told you that he rather regards Hawkesleigh's affair as an accident, and that no one is suspected, much less arrested."

"That was about what he told me," nodded Tom.

In fast time the racing craft reached Laketon, where Inspector Bonner and his policeman debarked. The inspector expressed his thanks in most polite words.

Then Captain Tom Halstead turned the nose of his craft southward. Late in the afternoon he was again at moorings, with nothing to do but keep track of the time.

Supper was eaten, and dark came down.

"Boat putting in," reported Dyer, from the deck, to the young skipper, who was taking a nap on a divan in the cabin.

"Know the boat, Ted?"

"It looks like the telegraph company's boat."

"Bring me the message, then, if one is delivered."

"Aye, aye."

Joe, who was plodding through a text-book that dealt with strength of materials, did not even glance up.

Two minutes later Ted Dyer ran into the cabin.

"Here's your telegram, Tom—your telegram, I expect."

"*The* telegram!" replied Tom Halstead, after breaking the seal of the envelope and glancing at the sheet inside. "Did the man have one for Crane also?"

"So he said."

There was a telegraph station on an island about seven miles from Penman's Island. A motor boat delivered messages throughout the islands, charging three dollars extra for the boat service.

"How soon do we start?" asked Joe, looking up.

"The instant that Crane is aboard," Tom answered.

Joe closed the book with a snap, leaped to his feet, then hastened to the engine room.

"Tell Hank to stand by with you to handle the anchor after you've brought Crane aboard," Tom continued. "Ted, first of all, you will take the small boat ashore and get Crane."

All was now brisk preparation aboard the

"Swiftsure." Joe was "tuning up" his engines; Ted was rowing ashore; Hank took below all the deck chairs but one, while Captain Tom leaned over the starboard rail of the steering bridge.

"There's something I want to ask you, Tom," Hank confided, as he strolled along.

"What is it?"

"How are we going to treat Crane on this trip?"

"Just as we would any other passenger whom Mr. Potter sent us. We'll use him decently as long as he does the same with us."

"But we're not required to be cordial with the fellow, are we?" Hank demanded, grinning.

"It would be a breach of good taste with us to be too intimate with any passengers," Tom replied.

"But——"

"Quiet, now, Hank! Here comes Crane."

CHAPTER IX

WHEN THE WAVES CLOSED OVER

"THE forward-port stateroom has been made ready for you, Crane," Tom called down from the bridge as the butler came up over the side.

"I intend using the forward-starboard room," replied the butler stiffly, as he stood holding the rather bulky "grip" that he had brought aboard.

"That's the owner's stateroom," replied Tom, somewhat astonished.

"That's the one I intend to use," replied Crane.

"No one may use that, without the express order of Mr. Potter," Tom replied calmly. "As I said, the forward-port stateroom has been made ready for you. If you have any reason for preferring any other room, except the owner's, I will oblige you."

"You will not oblige me, young man," retorted Crane in his most insolent manner. "You will respect my wishes, instead. I am aboard as the representative of the owner, and I direct you to turn over the forward-starboard stateroom."

"Can't do it," Tom rejoined.

"Then I shall help myself."

"Oh, very good," smiled Tom.

With pompous tread Crane passed along the deck, at starboard, until he reached the companionway to the cabin. Then he descended, finding the cabin lighted.

"You gave in easy!" whispered Hank reproachfully.

"Yes?" Tom inquired.

In a jiffy Crane was back on deck, still carrying his bulky grip.

"Halstead," demanded the butler sourly, "where is the key to the forward-starboard room?"

"In my possession," Tom answered.

"Hand it to me!"

"Step back, please, Crane. Go aft until we get under way. We shall need all the room up forward."

"I shall stay where I please," replied Crane.

"Not on this craft, after you've heard the captain's orders," broke in Hank Butts, resting a hard hand on the butler's nearer arm with a big hint of strength. "You'll oblige by going aft and keeping out of the way."

"Take your hand off my arm, fellow!" roared Crane angrily.

"After I've seen you aft of the deck-house,"

Hank rejoined. "And on this boat remember that I'm addressed as Mr. Butts. The last fellow who forgot that I threw overboard."

Hank's manner was masterful, his strength impelling. Crane, though boiling inwardly with rage, submitted.

"Now, don't come forward until you're asked," suggested Hank, as he let go his hold.

Shortly after the propellers of the "Swiftsure" were throbbing, as that craft turned her nose out into Georgian Bay. There was no fog, but the night was so dark and hazy that Tom did not feel safe in running faster than twenty-two miles an hour.

"Take the wheel, Hank, until ten o'clock," called the young skipper. "Then I'll relieve you until four in the morning. Ted, relieve Joe in the engine room, and ask him if he cares to come up and chat with me."

Despite the blackness and the haze there was no fog as yet, nor did Halstead think there would be. Yet, if fog were encountered, it would be further south, and Halstead wanted to be at the wheel in person at such a time.

"This is where we were better off on the Pacific Ocean, where we had so many officers under us that we didn't have to stand watch," smiled Joe, as he came up from below and joined his old-time chum of the Kennebec.

"I don't mind standing watch," Tom replied. "In fact, I like a boat of this sort better. I like to have something to do with my hands. Then I feel that I'm doing more to earn my money."

"Any fellow who follows life on the water is bound to earn his money," chuckled Joe. "The reason why I enjoyed not having to stand stated watch was that usually I could get all my sleep in one batch."

"You'll do well," suggested Halstead, "to follow my example, and learn how to take a nap whenever you get the chance. I've had my short nap this evening, and now I could go until to-morrow forenoon without more sleep."

Arm in arm the chums strolled around the deck-house.

Crane hadn't been seen since he went below the second time. But now, as the chums halted aft of the deck-house the butler's nightcapped head appeared through the cabin companion-way.

"I say," remarked Crane irritably, "I wish you fellows would stay forward. Your talking prevents me from getting my sleep."

Captain Tom didn't take the trouble to reply, but Joe mischievously asked:

"I say, Tom, did you hear a noise."

"It's me talking to you," snapped the butler.

"It would sound better if you said, 'It is I,' " Joe informed the complaining one.

"You fellows are keeping me awake with your blooming chatter!" insisted the butler.

"Now, see here, my man," answered Joe, stepping over to the companionway, "the first thing for you to learn about this boat, or any other craft, is that the captain is always spoken to or spoken of by his proper title. Further, I also object to having any head servant refer to me as a 'fellow.' Your manners are bad, Crane, but you're on a first-rate craft to learn better manners."

Joe looked so stalwart, as he stood there in his uniform, and Crane felt so lonely among those whom he knew not to be friends, that the butler wisely refrained from making an impudent answer. But he did say, complainingly:

"You haven't gone forward, and you haven't promised me to stop that talking."

"The captain gives all the orders on the 'Swiftsure,' " Joe Dawson informed him. "Crane, I believe you will feel a lot more comfortable if you return to your stateroom and confine yourself wholly to your own affairs."

Crane withdrew, muttering.

"Poor old rascal! I'm almost sorry for him," murmured Tom.

"So am I," replied Joe. "Not! Still, per-

haps it's not Crane's fault that he's a misfit among human beings. He may have inherited the fault."

Tom and Joe found seats by perching on the port rail. Not wishing to be mean in case Crane desired to sleep, they talked in lower tones.

They had sat thus for five minutes, when Hank Butt's fog-horn voice boomed aft:

"Craft two points off starboard bow! . . . Great Scott! It's the 'Flying Dutchman'!"

"The 'Flying Dutchman' again!" cried Skipper Tom Halstead, landing on his feet. "By Neptune! We'll try to overhaul her to-night."

"If she doesn't go up in thin mist the way she did before," retorted Joe Dawson, as he followed his chum forward.

As they ran, the bridge searchlight swung its broad ray on to the mysterious stranger.

There was the "Flying Dutchman," some two miles ahead, and following the same generally southern course.

Springing to the bridge, Tom held the night glasses to his eyes.

"She's throwing up a foam," he remarked. "There is more speed in her than I thought. She's traveling very nearly as fast as we are."

"She'll have to show a lot more speed to get away from us," Joe remarked coolly. "Will you stand six miles an hour more, Tom?"

"Better make it two miles," Halstead answered. "I don't like to race on a night like this. We're clear of islands for the present, anyway. Make it two miles more, Joe."

Dawson hastened down the steps leading to his own domain, Ted Dyer soon coming on deck.

"Have you made out any side lights on her, Hank?" Tom questioned presently.

"No; I've been peeping for her port light, but if it's well boxed it wouldn't show from our position. The green starboard light, of course, is invisible from here. It was that solitary stern light that caught my eye. I took a peep through the glass, then sent you my hail."

"That fellow is either a knave, or else he doesn't know the night regulations," muttered Tom. "Why, his stern light, which should be at the top of his flag-staff, is barely three feet above the water. But I wonder you didn't see it earlier, Hank."

"Humph! I'll wager that I did see it as soon as it was placed," returned young Butts.

Tom once more swung the searchlight on the craft ahead, and in whose direct wake Hank was now steering the "Swiftsure."

"There can't be any mistake about it, can there?" asked Halstead. "That's the same craft we saw last night."

"Or else her twin boat," grunted Hank.

"She isn't showing the phosphorescent glow to-night," smiled Tom.

"Perhaps that's to come a little later," Hank suggested.

"There she goes—straight off to starboard," cried Halstead. "Heading west. Perhaps she objects to our searchlight. All right. We'll shut it off. The stern light alone is enough to follow her by. Change the course. Keep in the wake of that stern light."

The chase continued. Slowly, though surely, the "Swiftsure" was gaining on the "Flying Dutchman" boat. The speed that the stranger was able to pick up had astonished the Motor Boat Club boys not a little.

"Her hull is built for speed," mused Tom aloud. "That boat may have engines that can show a bit more speed yet, at need."

"There isn't anything on the Lakes that'll go past this boat when Joe lets her out," Hank retorted. "To-night we'll overhaul the 'Flying Dutchman,' or we'll know the reason why!"

"There is our passenger, turned out aft," whispered Ted, climbing up to the bridge.

Tom turned to take in the figure of Crane, fully dressed.

There was an extra glass in a pocket at the bridge rail.

"Take this glass to him, Ted," said Tom,

holding it forward. "Perhaps Crane is curious for a look at the stranger."

Though somewhat surprised at the order Dyer took the glass aft. He soon came back with it.

"Crane has his own glass," reported Ted, and replaced the one he was carrying in the rack.

"Speed enough?" hailed Joe, appearing in the engine-room companionway.

"No; better give the engine a turn for a couple more miles," Tom rejoined. "That 'F. D.' is showing faster heels. There are islands to the westward, and I suspect he's trying to gain them so as to put the double-cross on his wake."

Though the "Swiftsure" now went forward at increased speed, it was hardly apparent to those on the craft.

"May I ask," inquired Crane, coming forward, "why you are going out of your course?"

Tom gazed down at the butler, eyeing him coolly.

"We are going out of our course, Crane, because a situation has come up which, in my judgment, renders it advisable for us to go out of our true course for a little while."

"Will Mr. Potter approve of your doing this?" asked the butler.

"I think so, Crane."

Then, after a cool study of the butler's face,

Tom Halstead suddenly shot out this question to him:

"Crane, why are *you* so anxious to have us give up this chase of the stranger?"

For an instant it looked as though the shot had gone home. The butler took a half step backward, looked embarrassed, then stammered:

"I? Er—er—I? Oh, I care nothing about what you do. I was only thinking of what Mr. Potter might say."

"About what?"

"About going out of your course, Halstead."

"How will he know it—if you don't tell him, Crane?" pressed the young skipper grimly.

"Why, I—er—er—of course I shall feel called upon to tell Mr. Potter."

"You will, eh?"

"Certainly."

"Tell Mr. Potter about what?"

"Why, about your going out of your course, to be sure."

"How does that responsibility fall upon you?" Tom demanded coldly.

"Because I am traveling on this boat as Mr. Potter's representative."

"As his servant and butler—Mr. Potter's messenger, you mean, don't you?" pressed Tom tantalizingly. He was trying, deliberately, to make the man angry.

"You are insulting," gasped Crane.

"No; it is you who are taking too many airs upon yourself," Tom answered sternly. "You, a servant, are traveling in a gentleman's stateroom, and the sensation has gone to your head!"

"I'll report you to Mr. Potter!" roared the butler.

"So you've promised already," rejoined Tom dryly. "Now, Crane, while you're about it, there's something else you might as well tell Mr. Potter."

"And what may that be?" demanded the butler loftily.

"Tell him every word of inside information you possess about the 'Flying Dutchman.' Tell Mr. Potter all you know about the craft ahead—about her real mission! Tell Mr. Potter why the 'Flying Dutchman' was seen leaving Penman's Island right after the explosion at the servants' cottage. And tell Mr. Potter why Phillips visited you yesterday—why he visited you another time, stealthily, at midnight!"

This time the shot seemed to go home with full force.

Crane tried to speak, but the words choked in his throat for a few seconds. The fellow trembled as he finally ejaculated:

"Young man, you're insolent—the most impudent wretch I have ever met. You take ad-

vantage of the fact that I can't resent it—you blue-uniformed young puppy!"

With that the butler strode aft.

"Oh, if that was said to me!" chuckled Hank dryly.

"What would you do?" questioned Tom.

"I'd go after my hitching weight," declared Butts. "That fellow would have gout in his toes by the time that he reached Chicago."

"Watch your course," said Halstead quietly. "There are islands looming up ahead."

As yet these islands could be seen only as vague shadows, but the young mariners, familiar with these waters, knew where the islands lay.

The searchlight was not being used. With the low-hung stern light of the "Flying Dutchman" now less than a mile and a half ahead and showing plainly, the broad electric ray did not seem to be needed.

"We're gaining on the stranger," announced Hank, shortly after.

"So I see," Tom nodded.

"Blazes! Look at that, now!" exploded Hank Butts a little later.

"What's the matter?"

"The 'Flying Dutchman' must have stopped. Her stern light is stationary, or I'm only a canal boat man."

"Stopped, surely enough," assented Hal-

stead, after a swift, keen look. "Her engine probably couldn't stand the strain of the forced miles she was making. Well, we'll soon be alongside."

"The fellow in charge of her must be using some bad language under his breath," chuckled Hank.

Tom, Hank and Ted were now staring fixedly at the light ahead. So was Crane, aft. Joe was standing quietly by his machinery. It would be time enough for him to have a look presently.

"Going to run right up alongside?" inquired Hank.

"Keep about a hundred yards to her port side," directed Tom. "As we run up with her we'll give the 'Flying Dutchman' an electric light bath that will make him think the sun has risen."

The "Swiftsure" was now within a quarter of a mile of the light ahead, so Skipper Tom rang for half speed.

"Wow! Look at that, now!" wailed Hank Butts suddenly, and in the same instant came a startled cry from Ted Dyer.

For the light, all of a sudden, had vanished instantaneously from before their eyes.

"Doused the glim, but we'll pick her up in a jiffy!" shouted Captain Tom Halstead.

In a twinkling he switched on the searchlight, exploring the surface of the waters. It was then that Halstead's cry of amazement swelled the chorus.

For only the black waters met their astounded gaze. The strange craft was—nowhere in sight!

CHAPTER X

TOM HALSTEAD KNOWS HE'S PUZZLED

"WHAT do you make of that?" quavered Hank in an awed voice.

"Nothing," admitted Tom Halstead in a tone of stupor.

Four islands loomed up in the near distance, before the searching ray, but still no sign of any craft but their own could be found.

"Foundered, right before our eyes!" gasped Ted Dyer.

"Nonsense!" broke sharply from Skipper Tom's lips.

"You saw her go down, didn't you?" growled Hank.

"No, I didn't. I saw the light sink under the water," Tom contended.

"Same thing," asserted Hank.

"I'm not so sure of that," retorted Halstead, ringing full speed ahead.

"What now?" demanded Hank, as the "Swiftsure" made a bound, then settled down to a fast gait.

"I'm going in between these islands," Tom replied.

"What for?"

"Don't talk now. I want all of my little brain-power for thought," Tom answered grimly.

In and out among the islands Skipper Tom threaded the way of the craft. All the time he kept the searchlight describing at least three-quarters of a circle.

In this time of intense excitement all three of the boys above decks forgot the butler's presence. But Crane stood aft, gazing forward, a sardonic grin wreathing his thin lips.

It was an hour ere Tom Halstead gave up his puzzled search, conducted at high speed.

"What's the answer?" demanded Hank, after Halstead had ordered him to resume the course for Chicago.

"I wish I knew," Halstead replied, with a queer smile.

"If that craft continues to hang around in these waters I can easily see that I'm not going to like boating on the Lakes," Hank announced.

"Pshaw, Hank! You're not superstitious, are you?"

"Oh, of course not!" Hank retorted half mockingly. "To be sure not! But I don't like to be chasing a strange craft, and then see her sink right before our eyes."

"If she sank, you'll never be bothered with that boat again," Tom rejoined.

"Not if it were an ordinary craft," Hank admitted. "But a 'Flying Dutchman' can sink before your eyes, then sail by on your quarter ten minutes later."

"I'd like to see *this* 'Flying Dutchman' sail by on our quarter," answered Halstead, with a short laugh.

"Well, *I* wouldn't," Hank admitted freely. "I've seen enough of ghostliness for one dark night!"

"There was nothing ghostly about it," Tom declared firmly.

"Then I suppose our eyes tricked us once more—what?" scoffed young Butts.

"That won't explain, either," Tom declared slowly. "We were tricked by someone's human ingenuity, Hank, depend upon it."

"Ever hear of Missouri?" grinned Hank.

"Yes; but I happen to know that *you* came from Long Island."

"There are some folks from Long Island who have to be shown, also," stated Butts. "Anyone who has sailed much with Captain Tom Hal-

stead has to be shown the photograph, at least, of the fellow who can fool said Halstead on the water."

"Then you've a bigger idea of me than I have of myself," laughed Tom. "I'll admit, to anyone, that I've been badly fooled to-night, and I can't even guess how it was done."

"You'll have it figured out between now and morning," Hank asserted confidently.

"Look at the bridge clock, Hank," Tom interjected.

"I see that it's a quarter to ten."

"So, as I'm not sleeping, and you might as well be, I'll take the wheel trick, Hank, without waiting for the even hour. Go down to your berth and sleep the sleep of the honest lad until I send Joe to call you at four in the morning."

At this moment Joe passed along the deck, his book under one arm.

"Going to relieve Ted?" Halstead called down quietly.

"Yes, though I stood most of his watch, anyway," Dawson answered.

Leaving the islands behind, the "Swiftsure" was now moving on a course almost due west. Out of Georgian Bay the course would continue about the same until some hundred and thirty-five miles had been traversed.

"I don't believe I'll sleep much for a while,"

yawned Hank, as he stretched his arms on the deck below the bridge. "My head is too full of things that I wish I could forget for a few hours."

"Bunk in and get some solid sleep. If I see the 'Flying Dutchman' I'll have you called. If I leave you alone you'll know, in any waking moment, that the 'F. D.' hasn't been sighted again. I'll keep you posted," promised Skipper Tom.

Then the night wore on. There was little to vary the monotony. Tom watched his compass for the most part, though when he reached the outlet of Georgian Bay he had the shore lights to consult.

"Anything for excitement," yawned Tom presently. "Even another glimpse of the vanishing 'Flying Dutchman' would be a welcome diversion on a pitch-black night like this."

Down in the forward-port stateroom the English butler, Crane, lay on his back, in a rather contented frame of mind, an ironic grin on his features.

"The young fools and their 'Flying Dutchman'!" he grinned. "Young Butts wouldn't chase her often if *he* had command. Dyer isn't much more cheerful about that mysterious craft. But Halstead! I wish that fellow could be more easily scared. I believe he'd chase the 'Flying

Dutchman' all the way to Davy Jones's locker if he knew the course! A fellow as hard to scare as Halstead may yet be a bad stumbling block in my path. It may be worth somebody's while to get rid of that fellow Halstead!"

There was something in Crane's method of thinking, however, to suggest that *he* was not the somebody who would undertake the task of ridding the world of Captain Tom Halstead.

Just before midnight Joe thrust his head above the top of the engine-room companionway.

"All clear on this part of Lake Huron?"

"No moving lights nearer than five miles," Tom called back.

"Nothing to prevent my leaving the engine room, then?"

"Not a thing."

"You know I can jump back in there, and get both hands on a lever, in about a half of three seconds, at need," continued Joe, as he stepped up on deck and stretched his legs. "It was getting dull down there, so I thought I'd come above and swap a few words with you."

"Good enough."

Captain Tom switched on the searchlight, sweeping the ray over the waters ahead. "Moving lights" (craft under way) could be seen readily enough, but any floating object, like a log or a derelict, could not be made out as easily

on a black night like this, and with Joe away from the engines it paid to be doubly cautious.

"Keeping the same speed, aren't you, Joe?" Tom asked, as his chum lounged under the bridge.

"Yes; twenty-two miles."

"Hank said he couldn't sleep to-night, after meeting the 'F. D.'" smiled Tom.

"Wait," chuckled Joe, "I'll see."

He disappeared below, to return quickly to the deck.

"Hank is a—well, he made a statement that wasn't just so," Joe announced. "He's snoring like a Gatling gun, only a bit slower."

"And Ted?"

"Ted's dreaming of San Francisco."

"You look sleepy yourself, Joe."

"My eyes are a bit sandy," Dawson admitted. "But I'm good to stand my watch. Tom, what on earth do you make of that 'Flying-Dutchman' craft?"

"Come up here and I'll tell you."

"I—I don't like to get too far from the engines," hesitated Dawson. "You know, on a night like this, you might have to signal quickly."

"I can't leave the wheel," laughed Halstead.

So Joe came up the steps, two at a time, then got as near as possible to the forward bridge

rail, so that he could vault over to the deck below if need came for the engineer to be at his post.

"Well, what do you think?" challenged Dawson.

"I believe——" began Halstead, then paused and glanced back of him.

"It must be something of a secret," guessed Joe shrewdly.

"There's one man I wouldn't want to have overhear me," whispered Skipper Tom.

"Crane?"

"Yes. Joe, if one could get hold of that butler chap and scare him within an inch of his life, I believe he could tell a mighty interesting bit of information about the 'F. D.'!"

"What makes you think so?"

"The way he looked, and the way his voice choked when I hinted as much to him to-night. Also the effect it had on him when I hinted that Carroll Phillips knew a little about the mystery, too."

"Then, if Crane has all that information concealed on his person," mused Joe aloud, "its a pity someone can't find the way to scare it out of him."

CHAPTER XI

HANK, THE CALAMITY HOWLER

TOM smiled, but shook his head.

"Wouldn't you scare the secret out of the wretch if you found a chance?" Joe demanded.

"I don't know. It would depend on the kind of scare, and the circumstances," Halstead answered. "I wouldn't do it by any unmanly means. To use some forms of scare is just as wicked as to hold a man up with a pistol."

"Then how are we to get at Crane's secret?"

"Perhaps we never shall," Halstead replied.

"But if it's a rascally secret—and it must be—then we really ought to get to the bottom of it," Joe insisted, "and expose the fellow to Mr. Potter."

"Joe, old fellow," Tom continued, "there's just one awful possibility, and that is that it's just barely possible that Mr. Potter may know all about Crane's doings!"

"You don't mean that Mr. Potter knew anything about the scheme to blow up the servants' cottage, or that he was an absent but actual party to the attempt to kill poor Hawkesleigh?" Joe asked incredulously.

"Of course not," the young skipper continued. "Yet, on the other hand, what is this present cruise for? To take Crane to his employer on some secret business that we know nothing about."

"It's none of our business, either," Dawson insisted bluntly.

"Of course not. Still, with all this secrecy, isn't it likely, or I should say, conceivable, that Crane, now traveling on a mysterious errand, is in league with his employer in some strange undertaking or planned deed?"

"Mr. Potter wouldn't be found in anything crooked," Joe blurted out.

"I'd hate to think so," Tom admitted. "He has always impressed me as a highly nervous yet wholly honorable man. But we're in the dark, Joe, and surrounded by mysteries, so I have been taking into consideration everything I know about any part of this business. While it's none of our business, what do you suppose Crane is taking to his employer in that heavy grip?"

"How do I know, Tom? Securities, very likely, that are to be used in some new deal on 'Change in Chicago."

"That's not likely," Halstead answered. "If Mr. Potter has valuable securities, as of course he must have, he's vastly more likely to keep

them locked in a safe deposit vault in Chicago than at a summer cottage and in a butler's care."

"Then I give up guessing what the grip contains," yawned Dawson. "Maybe it's the butler's changes of underwear and his extra shoes. It's none of our business, anyway."

"Of course not," Halstead agreed. "But all these questions come crowding into my mind when I get to thinking about the events that have happened lately."

Joe presently went back to the engine room. At ten minutes before four on that morning of delayed dawn, Halstead called through the speaking tube for Joe to rouse the other watch. Just before the hour Hank and Ted appeared, rubbing their eyes.

"We're ninety miles from the Strait of Mackinac, Hank," Tom stated, when his relief joined him. "The main course is now north-east. You have your chart for further particulars. Have me called, if you want, before passing the Strait."

"Call you for Mackinac?" demanded Butts, in a tone of disgust. "Do you think I can't carry the boat through that fresh-water ditch?"

"See here," added Halstead, throwing open the deck chart. "After getting by Mackinac, then to this point I've marked, and after that south-east for a hundred and thirty miles. I'll

be with you again before you get to the end of that south-east course. If you don't call me before, I shall be on deck again by ten o'clock, anyway."

"Don't hurry, if I don't send for you," Hank advised. "You may find your mattress temptingly soft."

Tom hurried below, to the captain's tiny cabin forward, and was soon stowed away in the narrow berth.

Joe, however, preferred to put in a few minutes on the bridge before going below. While there he mentioned what Tom had said about the possibility of scaring some worth-while truths from Crane.

"Say, that would be funny—to hand a canned scare over to Crane. But can it be done?"

"I don't quite see the way," Joe admitted. Then he went below, and was soon in his berth.

"I wish I could think up a way to frighten the fellow!" quivered Hank more than once.

The morning, though there was no actual fog, was as hazy as the night had been. It looked like "thick" weather ahead.

The passage of Mackinac was made, the "Swiftsure" entering Lake Michigan at about seven-thirty that morning.

Soon after Hank Butts changed the course to the new south-east route to Chicago.

Gusts of wind began to blow against the face of the young helmsman. Hank scanned the sky, then bent over for a look at the barometer.

"Falling," he muttered. "We'll hit something nasty before we reach Chicago. If Tom Halstead knew about conditions just now he'd tumble out of his berth and be up on the bridge."

Yet there seemed no sense in calling the young captain from his berth just yet. Even if trouble were coming the surface of Lake Michigan just at present was almost glassy. The spurts of wind spelled nothing of danger at present.

Besides, Hank Butts, from long practice and many rough experiences, would have been quite capable of handling the "Swiftsure" even had Tom not been aboard.

"Squalls coming," declared Ted Dyer, after showing his head on deck and taking a peep at the skies.

"That's an easy guess," nodded Hank.

"It's going to be one of these nasty lake blows, too," Ted decided, after a further squint at the weather.

"It looks as though we may run into something about as bad as the lakes can show in summer," Hank admitted.

"Shall I call the Cap'n?"

"What for?" glared Hank. "Are you afraid to trust yourself in my hands? Do you rank me as an amateur on the bridge?"

"No," Ted declared promptly.

"Then let the Cap'n sleep."

Ted perched himself on a deck stool close to the rail, yet in a position from which two bounds would carry him down among the machinery.

"There's a cloud coming after us!" cried Ted, pointing astern, but Hank did not turn, as all his duties lay ahead of them.

"Let it come," grunted Butts.

"Coming out of the north-east—right from Greenland," Ted Dyer went on. "Whew! But I'll wager there's wind in that cloud."

"It won't hurt us," Hank announced.

Within ten minutes the brownish, thick cloud reached the "Swiftsure." It struck almost fairly astern.

"A regular cold storage blast!" howled Ted, above the wind, as he clutched at the rail.

The squall drove the narrow craft ahead, burying her nose under the waters nearly. A great cloud of spray flew back, drenching both boys.

"Wow!" uttered Ted, picking up the stool. "I know enough to go down below where it's dry."

Another squall, and another struck astern and howled by. Waves began to rise, short, choppy, white-crested. Within two minutes more Lake Michigan looked like a great body convulsed with anger. The racing craft shivered as each wave struck under her.

Ted, in oilskins, appeared on deck, bearing Hank's oilskins also. He deftly climbed to the bridge, then laid hands on the wheel.

"I'll take her a minute," shouted Ted above the din. "Get into these oilskins."

Hank was so arraying himself when Tom Halstead, covered in water-proof clothing, appeared on deck and mounted to the bridge.

"Ted," he said crisply, "your place is by the engines in a blow like this. We may break one of our propellers. Give me the wheel."

Halstead, studying sea and sky all in a flashing glance, changed the course slightly, while Ted Dyer, at a bound, cleared the bridge rail, landing on his feet on the deck forward. He was not in time, however, to get to the engine room ahead of Joe Dawson, who appeared and shot across the deck like a flash.

"All right there, with Joe at the levers!" bawled young Halstead above the rising gale. "Come up here, Dyer, and stand by me. Hank, look the craft over and see that everything is snug and tight."

Hank knew what that meant—a lot of work to be performed on the jump. Butts was down on the deck and about his duties in a hurry, though none but one used to the sea could have kept his footing just then on decks with greenish waves racing over them.

Severe as the shock of the weather was, the "Swiftsure" began to ride more easily the instant that Tom Halstead's master hand rested on the wheel. Joe, too, was giving more power to the propeller shafts. As long as rudder and propellers held it would take a worse gale than this howler to disable the racing craft.

Through a cabin port, Hank, when he had finished his duties, caught a fleeting glimpse of Crane. That worthy had been pitched from his bunk by a heeling of the boat, and had swiftly dressed in terror.

"Say!" quivered Hank Butts, halting and clutching at a rail. "A fellow doesn't have to go to the ice box to get a scare on a day like this."

A look of grim laughter flashed into the Long Island boy's eyes as the thought came to him.

"And I've got this part of the boat all to myself — all to myself and Crane!" decided Hank.

In a twinkling he had hold of a life-preserver. This he fastened on over his oilskins. Then

he reached the cabin companionway, going down.

Crane was white-faced and trembling when the boy entered.

"This is awful, isn't it?" gasped the butler.

"Worst I've ever seen," declared Hank.

"Are we going to the bottom?" gasped the Englishman, as his gaze fell on the life-preserver strapped around Butts.

"We may keep afloat for five minutes," Hank answered. "With Tom Halstead on the bridge we may have ten minutes left above water."

"C-c-c-can't we land?" demanded Crane, his white lips trembling convulsively.

"We're going to land all right," answered Hank dryly, "but that land is going to be the bottom of Lake Michigan. That's where the boat is going. We'll have to take to the water, and trust to our lucky stars to keep afloat until the gale blows over to-morrow. Cap'n sent me down to see if the cabin is provided with life-preservers."

"I d-d-don't see any here," cried Crane, his faltering gaze roving around the cabin.

"I guess there aren't any here," Hank agreed. "I was afraid there weren't any."

"Give me the one you have around you!" coaxed Crane whiningly.

"And give myself up to be drowned?" demanded Hank gruffly.

"Boy, I'll give you ten dollars for that life-preserver!"

"Is that all you think my life is worth?" Hank demanded ironically. "Crane, you couldn't buy this preserver for a million dollars. We fellows all have 'em, but I don't believe there's another on board. I'll look, though—I'll look on the jump, for I don't believe we have five minutes more."

Just then a huge wave hit the craft, the shock knocking Crane's now weak legs out from under him.

"If there's anything you want to save, go and get it," bawled Hank, as he made for the companionway. "But it mustn't be heavy, or it'll drag you to the bottom of Lake Michigan. Hustle! I'll be right back."

The English butler's terrified face presented a blending of two hues, one greenish and the other deathly white. A man frightened into illness, Crane crawled to his stateroom. He was out again when Hank returned. Something oblong and bulky had been thrust into the inner pocket of the Englishman's coat, and that garment was now buttoned tightly over him.

"Where's the life-preserver?" screamed the

fellow, when he noted that the Motor Boat Club boy had come back empty-handed.

"Couldn't find one; there isn't another," replied Hank Butts, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"What!"

"You heard me," the Long Island boy retorted. "Don't waste words. Get ready for the worst!"

"D-d-d-o you mean th-th-that I'm to get r-r-ready to be d-d-drowned?" screamed the butler.

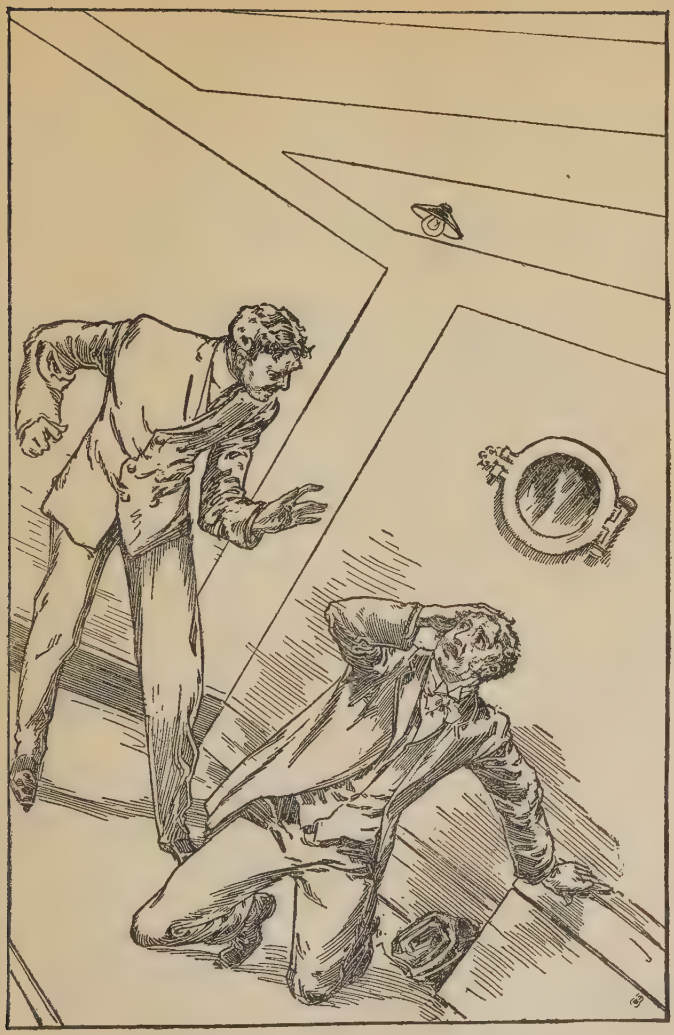
"We're going to do our best to save you," Butts answered. "Dyer and I will jump overboard, holding you by either hand. We'll try to keep you from sinking."

"B-b-b-but will th-th-that be safe?" quavered the butler.

"Oh, of course, if an extra big wave washes over us it may tear you away from our grip," Hank admitted. "But we'll do our best to keep you afloat for a while, anyway. Brace up, Crane, and be a man! Face drowning like a man!"

Instead the English butler's knees knocked together under him. Another wild lurch of the boat, and he fell grovelling to the floor of the cabin.

"Does drowning strike you as such a fear-



The Terrified Butler Fell on His Knees.

ful thing?'' inquired Hank Butts, bending over the fellow.

''Oh, it's awful—awful, Mr. Butts! I—so young, and so near death!''

''I guess you must have something pretty rocky on your conscience,'' remarked Hank quietly.

''Oh, I have — I have!'' confessed Crane. ''Mr. Butts, I'm a miserable scoundrel, one of the worst men that ever lived!''

''Oh, I understand,'' nodded Hank thoughtfully. ''Crane, I tell you, it's worth while to go through life decently. Then, when drowning comes to you all at once, you're not so afraid to face it.''

''Afraid?'' quavered the butler. ''Oh, Mr. Butts, I'm terrified beyond my power to describe!''

''Maybe there's a way to make yourself feel easier,'' suggested Hank, with grim wickedness.

''Do you think there is, Mr. Butts? Oh, do you think there is?''

Crane was now rolling on the cabin floor, a man given over to the downright illness of uncontrollable terror.

''Just ease your mind of some of the wickedness that's bearing it down,'' proposed Hank getting on his knees over the wretch.

"I will, Mr. Butts--I will!" agreed the terrified butler. "Shall I tell you all about it, sir? Shall I tell you the dreadful things that I've been doing?"

"If you do I think you'll find that it will help some," rejoined Hank, winking at the mahogany woodwork just over the butler's head.

CHAPTER XII

JOE DAWSON'S TALE OF WOE

"MR. BUTTS, I'm afraid you'll think me an awful scoundrel" began Crane falteringly.

"I'm sure I shall," young Butts agreed cheerfully. "That is, I mean, I shall be glad to help you unburden yourself. But the time is short. Tell me what troubles you most."

"Mr. Butts, I'm so weak that I don't feel able to do a thing. Will you be good enough to unbutton my coat. I want you to take the package that's inside."

"Anything to oblige," agreed Hank, almost exploding in his efforts to keep from laughing outright. "There goes the top button. Now, for the next! What's in the package, anyway? Tell me!"

Yank! Butts reached his feet as a strong hand gripped his collar and drew him swiftly upward.

"Stop this nonsense!"

It was Tom Halstead's now stern voice that spoke.

Hank was astounded. He hadn't expected his friend in the cabin just now. But Hank's presence of mind seldom deserted him.

"Let go of me, Tom," he ordered gruffly. "I'm trying to help this poor, guilty wretch. I've told him our chances of the boat going to the bottom, and Crane is going to set himself right by telling us the whole truth about himself and his awful, wicked doings."

"Indeed I am, dear Captain Halstead!" cried the butler.

"Now, stand back, and let us hear it all," urged Butts.

For answer Tom seized Hank with both powerful hands, hurling him toward the companionway.

Startled, puzzled, indignant, Hank fell against the wall, then wheeled about, uncertain as to whether it wasn't up to him to return to the fray and to carry it through.

"Hank, I'm ashamed of you!" Tom Halstead rebuked him sternly. "Go to the bridge! Don't leave there without orders! Start now!"

Another impulse came to Hank to run back and to avenge that swift shove, even if he fought only in good nature.

But there was that in the flash of Halstead's eyes which warned the other boy against anything at this moment save obedience of orders.

With a grunt Hank threw open the door and went out.

"Crane," inquired Halstead, "were you afraid that the boat is going down?"

"I know that it is," shuddered the butler.

"Then it's my duty to tell you that the 'Swiftsure' is riding out this gale with all the good behavior of an ocean liner. Crane, I don't believe there is a particle of real danger. If you're ill, then crawl back into your berth and keep yourself as comfortable as you can. Some time this evening I expect to tie up at a dock in Chicago."

"But Mr. Butts told me——" began the butler falteringly.

"Mr. Butts doesn't like you, and I don't know that I blame him," Halstead answered. "Yet Mr. Butts and I have different ideas as to the proper limits of practical jokes—that's all. Don't be afraid any longer, Crane. I've brought poorer boats than this through a lot of worse gales. Get your nerve up. You won't drown to-day."

With that Tom turned on his heel, walking toward the companionway. In another moment he was gone, leaving Crane a prey to conflicting but savage emotions.

"If I ever get a chance I'll send that shabby scoundrel, Butts, out of this world ahead of me!" growled the outraged butler, sitting up and shaking his fist. "The scoundrel! And I nearly let him take this from me!"

As the butler spoke he pressed his right hand against the bulging, oblong package in his inner pocket. "Hanging is too good for that fellow Butts!" the Englishman added vengefully.

Tom, in the meantime, had made his way back to the bridge, where Hank regarded him with vengeful eyes.

"You had to butt in, didn't you?" demanded Hank. "In another two minutes that villain would have told me all he knew about himself."

"You were taking an unfair advantage, Hank," Tom told him sternly. "You were frightening the fellow to the verge of insanity."

"Well, he's a scoundrel, isn't he?" propounded Butts. "Scoundrels haven't any rights!"

"Any man on this boat has rights," Tom retorted. "Hank, you meant well, but you

don't see the thing in the best possible light. It wouldn't be right for any of us to prey on a man's most awful fears. If we can't get at the truth about Crane in any other way, then we'll do without the truth."

"Oh, if that's the way you feel about it," grunted Hank. "Anyway, you had no right to sling me the length of the cabin."

"Perhaps I owe you an apology for that," Halstead admitted. "But the situation called for quick action, and I took it. As to handling you in the abrupt fashion that I did, I apolo——"

"Stop that, Tom Halstead!" ordered young Butts generously. "I don't want any apologies from you! Any day I'll back your judgment against mine on a question of right and wrong. Here!"

A sunny smile broke out on Hank Butts's face as he stretched out his right hand. Tom grasped it, pressing it hard. During this little scene Ted Dyer did not look around, but kept his eyes on the water, his hands on the wheel.

"You were gone so long that I knew you were up to something," Skipper Tom laughed. "So I hunted you up, Hank. I'm glad I did."

"So am I—now," the Long Island boy admitted.

By noon the gale had grown to great

strength. Along the lake there were a few little bays or tiny harbors into which the "Swiftsure" might have been taken, but Captain Tom felt that his duty lay in going ahead. He was under orders to have the boat at Chicago at the earliest possible hour, and so he decided against delays.

"We can go through this, anyway," he told Engineer Joe Dawson.

"We can if it doesn't get any worse," nodded Joe.

"We can if it gets a lot worse!" Tom rejoined, with emphasis. "This craft can weather the worst gale that Lake Michigan can put up."

"I don't know about that," said Joe simply. "I have never seen the worst that old Lake Michigan can do—but I've heard some gruesome tales on the subject."

"We can go through twenty miles an hour worse weather if the propellers hold and the engines don't balk," Tom declared gravely.

Both were in the engine room at this moment, though Halstead had his feet on the steps leading to deck.

Up above, on the bridge, Hank and Ted were handling the wheel between them. A narrow racing craft like the "Swiftsure," no matter how seaworthy she might be, was bound to

plunge and wallow in a sea like this. Having no sail, it was impossible to steady her.

Skipper Tom made his way to deck, standing just aft of the engine-room entrance. The spray, piling over the bows, caused his oilskins to run small rivers of water. Often his feet stood in six inches of running water. Had it not been for his rubber boots the icy water of Lake Michigan would have chilled him into an ague-like condition.

Though Halstead was unafraid, and confident of his ability to take the craft through to Chicago, the situation was one sufficiently trying to the strongest nerves.

Down in the engine room the roughness of the water seemed to increase the friction of the machinery threefold. Joe's chronic attitude, to-day, was one of bending over, oil-can in hand. Under such conditions, young Dawson, if famishing, wouldn't have left his engine room to go to another part of the boat after sandwiches and hot coffee.

Noon came and passed. Not one of the Motor Boat Club boys even as much as thought of eating. Who, for that matter, could be spared to provide food? Crane, perhaps, under other conditions, but the butler was now worse than useless.

Two o'clock in the afternoon found Tom Hal-

stead at the wheel, with Hank standing by, but not helping. Ted, chilled and tired out, had slipped down into the engine room to stretch and warm himself.

Suddenly a shrieking, howling blast of wind swept by the boat from the north-east. As the course was now due south, the "Swiftsure" was caught and almost hurled on her head. Hank's feet shot out from under him. His fine strength saved him just as his feet were shooting through under the bridge rail.

Skipper Halstead had to clutch at the wheel and hold on for dear life for a moment or two. The wheel itself slewed over so that the "Swiftsure" now drove before the wind.

Bracing himself, grunting with the strain, Tom threw his whole strength into his work, slowly bringing the boat back to her course.

"Say," bawled Butts in his ear, "this is turning into some gale!"

"Yes," shouted Tom, "but we'll pull through it, if——"

His voice was drowned by the fury of another assault of wind that raged by them. But this time the craft did not go off her course. Hank threw himself into the battle with the wheel, and their combined strength prevailed.

"If this thing keeps up," roared Hank presently, "we'll have some weather by and by."

Tom Halstead smiled. It was hard, trying work, even for dauntless hearts, but it was the kind of work he loved. To keep a racing motor boat alive and on her course in such a sea was no mean achievement.

During the next twenty minutes the gale steadily increased in severity, though the wind still came mostly in squally blasts.

Then, of a sudden, as the boat heeled to port, a new tremor was felt under the feet of the pair on the bridge.

The two looked at each other.

"That felt like a propeller giving!" gasped Butts.

"It did," Tom nodded. "If that happens, then we may want the life-preservers after all!"

Certainly the "Swiftsure" was behaving far worse than she had done at any time that day.

"Grip the wheel, Hank!" bawled the young captain in his ear. "I'm going to try to talk to the engine room."

At that instant Ted Dyer showed his head above the companionway, a megaphone at his lips.

"Port propeller useless!" Dyer bawled over the gale.

CHAPTER XIII

"OLD BULL-DOG HALSTEAD"

"BROKEN?" roared back Captain Tom Halstead.

"Think so," Ted Dyer answered.

Almost the worst, then, had happened. The "Swiftsure," in the sea that was now running, could hardly hope to keep afloat and remain under control.

"Come to the bridge!" roared the young skipper.

Ted made his way there, despite the pitching and tossing of the little craft. Bracing his feet against the stanchions, young Dyer took his place at the wheel.

Tom, as soon as released, made his way to the engine room.

Joe Dawson's face looked serious.

"I've had to slow down speed," he explained.

"I can feel that in the kick of the boat," Tom answered dryly.

"Look at the motion of that shaft," continued Dawson, pointing.

"It doesn't move as though it were broken, does it?" Halstead inquired.

"But as though it will break at any instant,"

Joe answered. "Are you still bound to make Chicago?"

"Not against common sense, of course," Halstead answered.

"Where are we, now?"

Tom gave his chum the present location of the craft, adding:

"So you see, Joe, it's a straight thirty-mile run, now, to any safe harbor."

"If the port shaft goes, in a sea like this, then the strain will break the other," sighed Dawson.

"I'm afraid so, too. But, Joe, let's try to run this shaft down. One of the parts may be loose, you know."

"Possibly," admitted Dawson reluctantly, "but it looks more like a strain that's going to wind up in a snapping break soon."

"The first elbow runs under the galley floor," Tom went on. "The second under the cabin floor. Joe, I'm going to look at the elbows."

In five minutes Skipper Tom was back.

"Joe, run on the starboard propeller, at as slow a speed as will give us steerage way," the young skipper ordered. "We'll give the port shaft two or three minutes to cool. Then we'll look at the elbow under the cabin floor."

"You've seen it?" Dawson inquired quickly.

"Yes; and I think it can be fixed, unless

something on the starboard side snaps. Bring your tools."

"Who'll look after the engine?"

"I'll call Ted."

"Can Hank stand the racket at the wheel?"

"He'll have to for a few minutes," Tom Halstead retorted. "I want to be with you in looking over the port shaft."

Dyer was called below. Young Butts made a wry face, then bent his muscular body to the task of controlling the wheel unaided in such a sea as was now running.

At this second invasion of the cabin, and prompted by the sound of voices, Crane thrust his head out at the stateroom door. He was a seasick, terrified, woe-begone looking wretch.

"What's wrong, Captain Halstead?" he asked in quaking accents.

"Be a good fellow, Crane, and don't bother us," Tom responded quickly, though not unkindly. "We're still headed for Chicago, and we'll get there some time to-night."

"O-o-o-oh, I hope so," wailed the desolate one, and the stateroom door closed.

Half an hour later the port shaft was in running order once more. The shaft looked fit to last through the trip unless subjected to some added severe stress.

How much speed do you want now?" asked

Engineer Dawson, as the chums made their way to the cabin companionway.

"Anything up to twenty-two miles that won't break us down," Tom answered.

"Will eighteen do in this sea?"

"Finely," Tom acquiesced cheerfully. "If, later, you find you can spare us more speed, let us have it."

Captain Halstead reached the bridge, gripping the spokes of the tugging wheel. Hank fell back, moving his arms up and down.

"Another ten minutes would have pulled my arms out of the sockets!" Butts groaned.

"Go down into the engine room and loaf a bit. Send Ted up to help me."

With only the starboard propeller running, the task of keeping the boat's head to her course had been doubly hard. Now Joe gave speed on both shafts, and Tom easily managed the boat until Ted joined him. Then both took hold.

"Chicago or first harbor?" asked Ted.

"Chicago, if our shafts last," Halstead replied briefly.

"Old Bull-dog Halstead!" muttered Dyer under his breath. "Our skipper has his orders from the owner, and those orders will go through if the boat holds together."

Within another hour the wind had abated noticeably. By five in the afternoon the wind

had fallen to thirty miles, though a nasty sea was still running.

However, one man could now control the wheel of the tossing, racing boat, and the propeller shafts gave every sign of holding.

"Give me the wheel, Ted," Skipper Tom ordered. "You go below and get up heat in the galley. Start some coffee, get a heap of potatoes ready and last of all put a few steaks on the electric grill. It's time to eat. I feel as though the bottom had dropped out of my stomach. Don't forget Crane, either."

Within an hour the young motor boatmen were feeling much better. Crane was offered some food, but was too seasick to answer. Last of all, Tom Halstead turned the bridge watch over to Hank and went below for a hearty meal.

The further south the "Swiftsure" went the easier became the sea. Yet, just outside Chicago, there was still rather rough water.

It was about eleven o'clock at night when Tom, in the bow, called the steering and other orders that sent the "Swiftsure" in to her berth at one of the yacht-club wharves.

The instant that the lines were made fast, Butler Crane appeared on deck.

"Ted," sang out Tom Halstead, "run to the nearest 'phone. Call up Mr. Potter at his hotel and report our arrival."

"Aye, aye, sir," came from Dyer, who had shed his oilskins and now appeared in the neat uniform of the Motor Boat Club.

"It's not really necessary, Mr. Halstead," broke in Crane, moving forward. "I am going ashore at once to report our arrival to Mr. Potter."

Then the butler came nearer, adding, in an undertone:

"I am leaving that grip in the stateroom, and have the key in my pocket. I shall have to make you responsible for the protection of that stateroom until my return. The bag contains items of the greatest value."

"I'll guard the stateroom door, and no one can enter except by way of the door," replied Halstead. "How soon will you return, Crane?"

"I shall not be away more than fifteen minutes. Possibly not that long."

"Are my orders changed?" inquired Ted.

"Yes," answered the butler.

Dyer paid no heed to him, but stood facing Tom Halstead, waiting for instructions.

"Ted, go below and stay where you can watch the forward-port stateroom," Halstead ordered.

Ted went below as directed.

A little time passed. Then a blue-uniformed man came hurriedly down the wharf, springing aboard.

"Where's the captain?" asked this man briskly. His uniform and cap proclaimed him to be a customs inspector in the United States service.

"Here, sir," Halstead answered, stepping forward.

"Any of your crew ashore?"

"No, sir."

"Any of them been ashore?"

"No, sir."

"How about your passengers?"

"This boat is owned by Henry Potter——"

"I know that," interrupted the inspector curtly. "I asked you about passengers."

"We brought over Mr. Potter's butler."

"No one else?"

"No one else, sir."

"Where is the butler?"

"He went ashore, sir."

"Captain," demanded the customs inspector, eyeing the young skipper sternly, "do you mean to tell me that you allowed a passenger to go ashore until he had been examined by a customs inspector?"

"He has gone only to report our arrival to Mr. Potter," Halstead explained. "He will be back in a few minutes."

"Did your passenger take any baggage ashore with him?" pressed the inspector.

"No, sir. He brought only a grip, containing valuable items for Mr. Potter."

"Where is that bag?"

"In the forward-port stateroom."

"Lead me to it," ordered the government man.

"I'm sorry, sir, but the butler has the key. However, as he mentioned the value of the bag to me, I have one of my men in the cabin, his eye on that stateroom door."

"Then you are sure that your passenger, whom you allowed to go ashore in advance of the customs inspection, did not carry any baggage with him?"

"I saw none," Tom made answer.

"But he had a big, oblong package that bulged out the front of his coat," Hank hinted.

"He did, eh?" asked the customs inspector, wheeling. "What was in that package?"

"How do I know?" Hank returned.

"Technically I am wrong, Mr. Inspector, in allowing a passenger to go ashore in advance of customs inspection," Captain Tom Halstead admitted. "Yet it must be borne in mind that I have been doing the same thing all through this summer. Mr. Potter, who comes over from his summer home in Georgian Bay, has always sprung ashore as soon as we arrived, and no fault has been found before this."

"Orders have been changed — remember that," grunted the inspector, as he sprang ashore. "Captain, don't allow anyone on or off this boat until I return."

"I will not, sir."

The customs inspector was soon lost among the shadows up the wharf. He was back, however, within three minutes, and walking slowly.

As the customs man stood by the string-piece another man came down the wharf—Crane.

"Were you the passenger on this trip of the 'Swiftsure'?" demanded the customs man, stepping over to the butler.

"Yes," Crane admitted.

"Then I want a word with you."

The two disappeared again into the shadows. Those on the "Swiftsure's" deck saw a third figure trailing softly after the pair.

"Humph;" muttered Hank Butts in Tom's ear. "There are the elements of a first-class mystery over yonder."

"It's part and parcel of the same old mystery," returned Halstead in an undertone. "This is merely another chapter in the yarn of the 'Flying Dutchman.' But the mystery is clearing up a bit. The interest of the customs man shows that the mystery is connected with smuggling. Now, what could be smuggled in small compass from Canada? Jewels—prefer-

ably diamonds, as being worth the most money!"

Tom Halstead's keen mind had seized upon the real situation!

CHAPTER XIV

UNCLE SAM'S MAN WANTS HELP

MORE minutes passed, but Crane did not return. At last an automobile rolled out on to the wharf. As the car stopped Henry Potter sprang out, hurrying to the "Swiftsure."

"Captain Halstead," cried the owner, as he sprang aboard, grasping the young skipper's hand, "I congratulate you! You had a fearful day on the water!"

"Not so bad, sir," Tom smiled.

"I happen to know better," laughed the owner. "All day I have been 'phoning to the weather bureau. So I happen to be in possession of the information that to-day's has been the worst summer gale in seven years on Lake Michigan."

"As bad as that, sir?" Tom queried. "Then it was worse than I supposed."

"Two steam craft are known to have foundered to-day," Mr. Potter went on.

"Why, we saw no craft in distress, or we would have offered aid," young Captain Halstead answered. "In fact, we saw little of shipping on Lake Michigan to-day."

"Because the skippers had mostly been warned and stayed in port," replied the owner. "Captain Halstead, I am proud of you."

Then Mr. Potter's manner changed abruptly.

"Where's Crane?" he demanded.

"He just walked away with a customs officer," Halstead answered.

"Not under arrest, was he?" asked Mr. Potter quickly.

"He didn't appear to be, sir."

"I hope the fellow hasn't been trying to do small smuggling," the owner continued casually.

Tom noted that Mr. Potter did not betray any great interest in the matter. Hence, if Crane had been engaged in any attempts at smuggling, the young skipper felt sure that his employer was no party to it.

"Crane brought over what I wanted, of course?" Mr. Potter continued.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is it?"

"I think Crane brought what you wanted in a big grip, sir."

"Most likely. Where is it?"

"In the forward-port stateroom, sir. Crane

said it was there, and that he'd hold me responsible for its safety until he returned. You'll find Mr. Dyer on guard below at the door."

"Let's go down, Captain."

So Tom followed his employer into the cabin. The stateroom door was locked, but the owner was provided with a set of duplicate keys, and with one of these he entered the stateroom, leaving the two young motor boat boys outside.

"It's all here in the grip—just what I wanted," called Mr. Potter from the stateroom. "Dyer, will you kindly put the bag in my car for me?"

Ted started forward, but Tom stopped him.

"Pardon me, Mr. Potter," offered the young skipper, "but I am sorry to say that the bag can't go ashore until it has been properly inspected by a customs man."

"Nonsense," scoffed Mr. Potter, throwing open the stateroom door.

"It sounds like nonsense, I know," said Tom gravely, "but the customs men rule at the wharf, and I've been called once, to-night, for allowing a passenger on shore in advance of inspection. No more baggage will leave this craft until the customs men say so."

"Who owns this boat?" laughed Henry Potter, though his levity did not conceal the fact that he felt annoyed.

"You do, Mr. Potter, but I'm the captain, and I'm the one who has to reckon with the customs force."

"Oh, let Dyer take the bag to my car," proposed Mr. Potter. "I'll be personally responsible to the customs authorities."

"I'm extremely sorry, Mr. Potter, but that won't do," Tom replied mildly.

"Oh, well, then," sighed the owner, closing the stateroom door and locking it again. "Send someone to 'phone for a night inspector."

"There's one on duty here," Tom Halstead rejoined, "and I expect he will return at almost any moment."

While they were talking Mr. Potter and his young skipper went up on deck.

"I'll take a turn in my car while we're waiting for this troublesome customs man," suggested the owner.

"Once more I'm sorry, Mr. Potter, but you've been aboard, and have been at your baggage—contents unknown—and I can't permit you to land until the customs man says so."

"Confound the red tape!" cried the owner. Then he grinned good-humoredly, taking a seat on a deck chair. "All right, Captain. I'll wait and enjoy the experience of being a prisoner on my own craft."

Ten minutes later the inspector returned.

"The owner is aboard, and wishes some baggage inspected so that he can remove it," Halstead called as soon as he made out the United States' uniform on the approaching man.

"I'm astonished that the owner waited for me," replied the customs man grimly, as he came over the side.

"I didn't want to, but my bull-dog captain made me," laughed Mr. Potter. "Will you come below, Inspector?"

Henry Potter appeared to be some thirty-seven or thirty-eight years of age. He was rather tall, of slender, not to say thin build. He was a man of usually pleasant manners, though he was always extremely nervous. The life and battle on 'Change had destroyed, as it often does, whatever of the real joy of living a man may expect to find as his right. Yet Mr. Potter was popular with those who knew him well; he was considered a feverish gambler in the Pit, and in other headquarters for speculation, but he was regarded as being a wholly honorable man.

It was Mrs. Potter, according to general belief, who kept her husband alive, and saved him from breaking down utterly under the strain of his feverish financial operations. She was a woman some six years younger than her husband. As the pair had no children, Mrs. Potter

gave up her life to the wistful care of her husband. She had often tried to persuade him to leave speculation alone, though without success.

"The contents of this bag are all right, sir," the boys heard the inspector say down in the cabin. "Nothing but financial papers. You may take them ashore."

Ted Dyer sprang down the companionway to take the grip and carry it ashore.

"Any especial orders for me, sir?" Tom Halstead asked as the owner reappeared.

"None, Captain, except that you'll stay here and await orders."

"Very good, sir. Oh, one question more, if you please. Is Crane to berth aboard the boat while we remain here?"

"Just as you please," replied Mr. Potter, who was now on the wharf, but turned. "Do you want him aboard, or don't you?"

It was on the tip of Halstead's tongue to reply, candidly, that he would rather not have the butler aboard, when the customs inspector muttered in a low tone:

"Captain, by all means have the butler stay here!"

So Tom answered that he would be very glad indeed to have Crane make his quarters aboard the craft.

"In fact, sir," Tom added, "I've a special

reason for feeling that I'd like to have him stay here."

"Oh, all right, then," nodded Mr. Potter. "I'll send him back and make him hang out here."

Whirr-rr! chug! The automobile was gone.

"Now why did you want me to have that fellow aboard?" demanded young Halstead, wheeling upon Uncle Sam's man.

"Because then we'll know just where the fellow is," replied the customs inspector.

"Then Crane is doing something that he ought not to do?"

"Candidly, he is, Captain—or we suspect as much. I am candid with you, because our people have already looked you up, and we know you are the kind of young man we can trust. We know your record from other ports, you understand. Captain, unless we're greatly in error, your boat has been used to bring over a very large consignment of diamonds and other gems from the Canadian side, thus escaping a very heavy amount in duties."

"Why, at most, Crane didn't take more than one oblong package concealed in an inner coat pocket."

"Diamonds are not very bulky," smiled the customs man dryly. "Neither are rubies nor emeralds. All three gems are very costly. That

package might have contained a fortune in cut gems. As the duty is sixty per cent., Captain, you can readily figure that another fortune in duties has been evaded at this port."

"Then you didn't find the package on Crane?"

"No; the fellow had had time to slip his package to another person on shore."

"Have you arrested him?"

"No; we can do that at any time. Just now Crane is being shadowed. We want him to lead us to the others in his gang. Crane is only a small-fry fellow in a clever and dangerous crowd. He appears to be the messenger only. It is the ring-leaders—the brains of the gang—that we want."

"Then I think, Mr. Inspector, you've given your confidence to the right man. If I can help you run down the gang you may depend upon me."

"That's just what I want," replied Uncle Sam's man in a low voice, "and you can give us more help, Captain, than any other man alive!"

CHAPTER XV

TOM'S TRICK ON CRANE

"LET us go below," added the customs man.

"All right, sir. Hank, get up on the wharf. If anyone approaches, hail him, and then I'll know that someone is coming."

Down in the cabin the conversation was carried on in low, earnest tones.

"There's a lot that I can tell you," Tom hinted. "I wish one of your superiors could be here to hear it."

"Won't I do?" smiled the customs man.

"Of course. Yet, after I've told you what I know you'll only want to take me before one of your chiefs, to repeat the whole story. That is why I wish your chief could be here now."

"Perhaps I'll do, after all," smiled the customs man. "I have on an inspector's badge, it is true, but I am also entitled to wear this other badge."

Unbuttoning his uniform coat the visitor displayed a second badge, which read:

"Deputy Inspector of Customs, Chicago."

"My name is Wilson," continued the visitor,

"and about the only man above me at this port is the collector of customs himself."

Tom Halstead thereupon launched himself into a narration of the whole story of events at Penman's Island, starting with the explosion and fire at the servants' cottage. He told of the "Flying Dutchman" craft, of the vanishing rock, of Carroll Phillips's visits to Crane and of the assault upon Hawkesleigh.

"There's a wonderful story there," mused Deputy Collector Wilson. "It all goes to show that the gem-smuggling gang is fully prepared to put big things through."

"How do you account for the 'Flying Dutchman' and the vanishing rock, for instance?"

"Frankly, I can't offer to account for them," admitted Mr. Wilson thoughtfully.

"I mean to account for them one of these days," retorted Tom Halstead. "The fellow who plays such a grisly set of tricks on me must become used to the idea that I'll probe his game to the bottom."

"And I believe that you'll succeed in doing it," murmured the deputy collector, studying the boy's face keenly.

"What is Phillips in this game?" Halstead asked, after a few moments of silence. "Is he the head of the scheme?"

"Frankly, we don't know," replied Wilson.

"Yet you seemed to know enough to be on the lookout for this boat when she came in."

"The Department knows, from its secret agents in Canada, and abroad, that a good many gems are being smuggled from Canada into this country," replied the deputy collector. "In fact, such smuggling has been a regular industry ever since duties were levied on precious stones. Our secret agents in Europe, in South Africa and elsewhere endeavor to keep track of all big sales and shipments in precious stones. So the Department became convinced, as it often has been before this, that many more diamonds, emeralds and rubies were going from Europe to Canada than were needed for the Canadian market alone. Hence our men have been prowling through Canada for more than a year. In that way they began to suspect the operations of the gang, and we have been especially alert here at Chicago. But we have been ignorant of the part that Carroll Phillips is playing in the big fraud. We didn't even have him on our list of suspects."

"Yet you had Crane?"

"Yes; for three or four different times he has met a man on the Canadian shore whom our secret agents have been watching. And we discovered that Crane expected soon to make a trip over to Chicago. So we have been look-

ing out for him, and your craft, the 'Swiftsure,' has been under suspicion. That suspicion accounted for our looking up your record at other ports. Your record was so clear, clean and open that we dropped all suspicion of you, Captain Halstead. In fact, your splendid service to the authorities at San Francisco made us feel certain that it would be wasted time to suspect you of any part in the present big fraud. Tell me, do you think that Crane will make any more trips over in the near future?"

"Probably not," smiled Tom. "Not unless he's a greater fool than he appears to be. He already knows, from your overhauling him tonight, that he's suspected."

"What I meant was, is Mr. Potter going to require him to make any more trips over here?"

"Not that I know of."

"I wish we could put a man on Penman's Island and in the waters around there," mused Mr. Wilson.

"Any man to be employed on Penman's Island would have to secure his position through Crane," Tom replied. "But I can put one of your men on this boat, if you want."

"Can you?" asked the deputy collector, glancing up quickly.

"Yes; if he knows anything about work on such a craft."

"I have the very man!" cried Mr. Wilson.

"Then let him be here at eight o'clock tomorrow morning, and tell him not to be discouraged by rebuffs, or by any contempt I may show him," suggested Tom, thinking fast. "Better have him rather ragged-looking—like a man who has been down on his luck for some time. Tell him to wait until he is alone with me, and then to tell me that he comes from you."

"Would you know this ring again, if you saw it?" asked Mr. Wilson, taking a heavy seal ring, cut in cameo, from one of his pockets and passing over.

"Yes," answered Tom, after inspection.

"Very good; the man I send will hand you this ring on the sly, and you will know that he comes from me."

"Then that will be all right, sir."

"But that won't help us much on shore, will it?" resumed Mr. Wilson.

"I think we can fix that," smiled Tom. "Post your man, after he gets the job here, to develop into a surly fellow. Tell him to 'sass' me sometime when Crane is within hearing. I'll knock your man down, and use him so badly that he'll hate me. Then, if your man knows anything, he ought to be able to strike up a friendship with Crane, who certainly hates me."

"The very idea," cried the deputy collector, jumping up. "Halstead, I don't wonder that you've succeeded as well as you've done. You can't dodge success, for you don't carry your brains around canned. You keep them always ready for instant use! Your man will be here sometime around eight o'clock to-morrow morning. Don't be afraid to maul him. He's not a big-sized chap, but he has a body that will stand a lot of hammering. I trust my man won't be so disagreeable that you'll throw him overboard in earnest. Another thing, Halstead. If you receive any message that Mr. Gray, the ship's chandler, wants to see you, you go ashore to the place named, and you'll find—me!"

"I understand, Mr. Gray," Tom nodded.

"I'm certain that I don't need to give *you* any more directions," laughed the deputy collector, holding out his hand. "Good night, Captain! Help us to do something big, and you'll be rewarded out of our special funds."

Mr. Wilson speedily vanished from the scene. As it was warm at Chicago, and the night was still young, Halstead decided to go up on the wharf to stretch his legs.

As he turned to leave the cabin he saw a bunch of keys hanging from the lock of the door to the stateroom that Crane had occupied on the eventful voyage.

"Mr. Potter forgot his keys," muttered Captain Halstead, stepping forward and locking the door, after which he dropped the keys into a trousers pocket. "I'll return them to him when he comes aboard."

Then Tom went up on the wharf, where he found Hank and Ted chatting together. Even in port Joe Dawson was down in the engine room with his book.

"How long are we going to stay in this beastly hot hole?" asked Hank grumblingly.

"That's about the meanest name I ever heard applied to one of our finest American cities," Halstead laughed.

"It's summer, and it's hot here," Hank rejoined. "Any place that's hot is a beastly hole to me. The south shore of Long Island is the only place for a human being to have to be in summer."

"That's because you come from Long Island," teased Halstead. "Now, I happen to hail from the mouth of the Kennebec River, so I know that that is the most delightful place in the world in summer."

"Humph!" grunted Hank.

"You don't have to believe me," Tom retorted. "Ask Joe Dawson."

"Humph! He's a Kennebec boy, too."

"No place in the East compares with San

Francisco in summer," said Ted Dyer. "There are no hot days in 'Frisco. Why, on a good many summer evenings a tenderfoot has to put on a coat out there."

"Listen to California bragging," grumbled Hank, and strolled off by himself.

Steps were heard coming from the head of the wharf. Then Crane appeared, carrying his coat folded over his arm.

"It's hot here to-night," observed the butler, fanning himself with his straw hat as he passed.

"So we've been remarking," Halstead answered. "What was the trouble with the customs man, Crane? Been trying to smuggle in a box of cigars, or a sealskin handkerchief?"

"Humph!" retorted the butler, and kept on his way aboard the "Swiftsure."

Though the butler evidently didn't guess it, Tom was covertly watching him.

Two or three minutes later Crane, still in his shirt sleeves, came up on deck and helped himself to a chair.

"Ted," whispered Tom as the two strolled along, "I'm presently going aboard the boat. Now, your job is a very simple one. Crane hasn't had any especial reason to take a dislike to you. Also, he probably feels very lonesome. So you go over and chat with him. No matter what you have to do, don't let him leave

the deck, or get near the companionway of the cabin until you've received the high sign from me."

"That sounds easy," conceded Dyer, and went aboard.

Five minutes later Tom Halstead dropped down into the engine room. He chatted with Joe for a few moments, next winked, then slipped down a narrow passageway that led from the engine room to the galley. Back of the galley was a small storeroom space for food supplies. From this storeroom a door opened into the cabin, but usually the door was kept closed. Just at present several cases of canned goods stood against the door. These cases Tom deftly moved, and slipped into the cabin.

Out came Mr. Potter's bunch of keys. A moment later Tom Halstead was in the forward-port stateroom with the door closed again.

The light was on here. Tom's keen eyes took a swift survey of the stuffy little apartment.

Next he inserted a roving hand under the mattress of the berth. After that he explored other possible hiding places in the room. In a clothes cupboard a cork life-preserver, untied, lay loosely huddled on the floor.

Tom dived under this with both hands.

He could hardly repress a cry of astonishment and exultation as he brought to light a

morocco leather case, fully a foot long, some five inches in width and two in depth.

"I thought Crane was bringing something back on board, from the way he held his discarded coat on his arm!" throbbed the young skipper, as he handled the leather case. "By Neptune, this looks as though it might be the same package that caused the bulge in his coat when he first sneaked ashore to-night. But why should Crane bring the case back here, after having landed it on American soil? Why —unless he feared that the customs men knew where to look for this ashore? In that case he may have figured that they'd never think of looking aboard the 'Swiftsure' again. But I'd better get out of here. Crane may not be a very brave man, but he'd certainly do his best to kill me if he found me here right now."

Then another thought flashed into the young skipper's mind as he stood in the cabin and locked the stateroom door once more.

"Pshaw! Excitement is making a big booby of me! This case is empty, of course. Crane merely brought it back, to be used on the next smuggling trip. All this work on my part for an empty case!"

Experiencing a feeling of disgust over his late elation, young Halstead slipped back into the storeroom, locking the door and piling up

the cases again. Then he turned to examine the leather case.

The catch worked easily enough, and Tom raised the cover. Then he fairly shook from head to foot. As his trembling fingers moved from pocket to pocket in the case a brilliant dazzle of jewels—red, white and green—made him dizzy.

Here, indeed, was a fortune in precious stones!

CHAPTER XVI

A WILD MAN ON THE DOCK

"I'LL go blind if I look at this show much longer!" quivered Tom Halstead.

After one more dazzled look he closed the case. This he slipped under his uniform jacket, hugging it hard with his left arm. Then he made his way into the engine room.

Dawson still sat on a locker, his eyes on his book.

"Joe," whispered Halstead, "rise just a moment. I have something that I want to slip into the locker. Thank you. Now sit down again, and stay there. Don't stir until I tell you that you may."

Joe nodded, without looking up or asking

a single question. He resumed his seat and his book, and Halstead knew that good old Joe could be depended upon to sit there for twenty-four hours if necessary.

"Well," said Tom, raising his voice slightly, "there's no use trying to remain down here and get up a conversation with a fellow that is trying to soak a whole encyclopedia into his system."

With that he ascended the steps to the deck.

"I'm going to bed soon," remarked Hank Butts, coming aboard.

"Fine!" chuckled Tom. "The temperature in your quarters is about a hundred and thirty degrees. I'll look in in a couple of hours, and inquire whether you've had any rest."

With a grunt of discontent, Hank threw himself into a deck chair.

"I suppose I may as well sleep here," he remarked. "Yet, if I do, it will rain—sure!"

Ted Dyer laughed. He was perched on the starboard rail, not far from Crane. It did not look as though Dyer had managed to strike up much of a conversation with his man, but the butler was still on deck.

Soon, however, Crane arose, and, without a word, passed below.

After two minutes had passed, Crane came leaping up on deck.

"Who's been in my stateroom?" he called, his eyes glaring wildly.

"You and Mr. Potter have the only keys to the room," Tom replied in an indifferent tone, as he glanced at the man.

"Some one——"

"Have you lost anything?" Halstead inquired calmly. "You were down there only a few minutes ago."

"I thought I locked the stateroom door," the butler faltered. "Yet I may——"

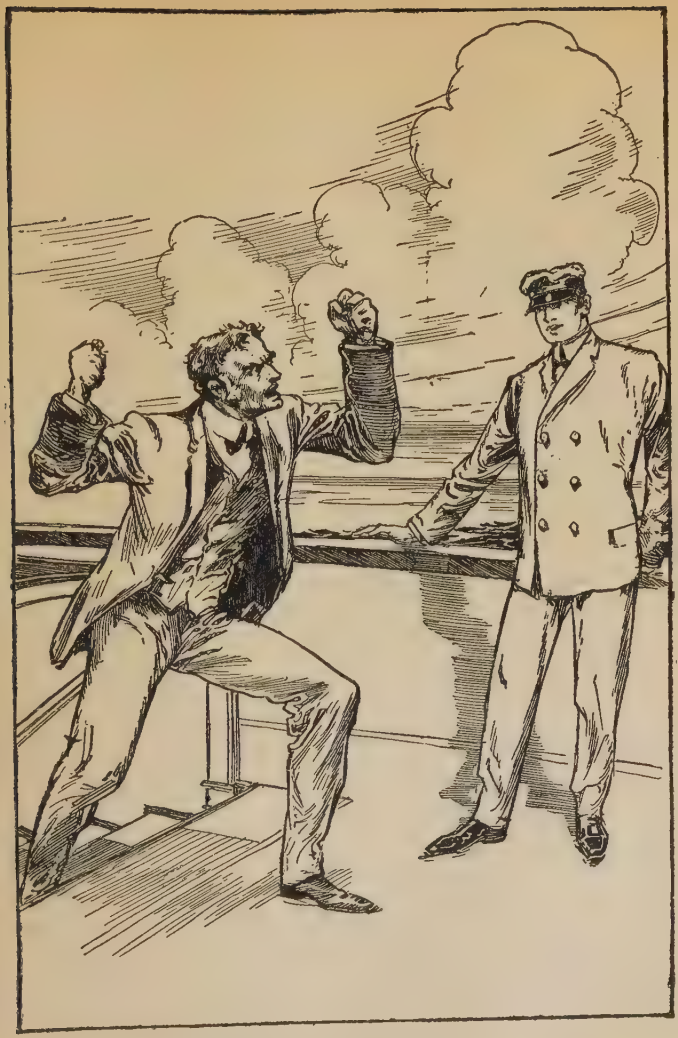
"Have you lost anything?" Halstead repeated, though his manner did not betray great interest.

"No matter!" snapped the butler, and raced below once more.

Ted Dyer glanced at his young commander, though he said nothing.

Up to the deck came the sound of things being wildly moved in the forward-port stateroom. Crane was plainly tumbling each article over a dozen times. Then he raced to the deck, putting on his hat and coat as he ran.

"Find what you lost, Crane?" called Tom in a voice of casual interest, but the butler leaped to the wharf without replying. He seemed like a man who had suddenly gone crazy. His long legs moved so fast that he was soon lost in the shadows of the night.



"Who's Been In My Stateroom?"

"Oho!" murmured Ted Dyer, glancing again at his skipper.

"Yes," Tom Halstead admitted calmly, "I got what Crane lost—and a lucky thing it was, too!"

"What was it you——" Ted began in a whisper. But Halstead checked him with a look.

"How long do you want me to stay up here?" demanded Hank from the deck.

"Until relieved." Halstead spoke in a pleasant voice, but Hank, accustomed to his skipper's ways, understood instantly that something unusual lay in the wind.

A slight gesture was enough to cause Ted Dyer to saunter along in Tom's wake after that young motor boat man had gone to the engine room.

"You'll find the Captain in the passageway," whispered Joe Dawson, who was just in the act of reseating himself on the same locker.

Ted followed into the passageway. An electric light burned there, and by the aid of its rays Ted found Tom standing at the further end.

"You helped me to find this, Ted, so I'm giving you the first look at it," whispered Halstead.

With that he brought the morocco case into view.

"Now, don't start in to make a big noise when you see it," admonished the young skipper.

With that he threw the case open, revealing the seemingly countless gems contained therein.

"Glass imitations?" whispered the astounded Ted.

"No, you simpleton! Real gems—probably worth hundreds of thousands of dollars!"

"Where on earth did you get them?" asked Ted, staggered.

"In Crane's stateroom."

"His?"

"No."

"He—stole them?"

"No."

"Then how——"

"Crane belongs to a gang of Englishmen, and perhaps others, engaged in smuggling such gems into the United States, beating the customs duties and thereby reaping fortunes in rewards for dishonesty."

Tom rapidly recounted some of the facts that he had gleaned. Ted was wonderstruck.

"Now, tell Joe to come in here. Send Hank down from the deck to watch in the engine room, and you take up the deck watch. Do it all so quietly that anyone watching from the darkness beyond would know nothing."

Ted vanished. A minute later Joe entered. Dawson manifested much more calmness. He took the case in his own hands, looking over the gems with some curiosity, then passed back the case, remarking:

"Crane and his fellows are working on the wrong idea. They think dishonest money can be made in lumps. A man always has more money in the end if he works hard for it and saves some of it. Crane—poor fool!"

Then Hank Butts came into the passageway. He, too, heard the story.

"You say these brilliant little stones are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars?" asked Hank.

"That's my belief," Tom nodded. "I'm no gem expert, of course."

"Whew!" whistled Hank. "If I had charge of that case I'd be under a fearful temptation!"

"To do what?"

"To light out with the goods," muttered Hank. "To get to some place where I was unknown, sell the stuff, and——"

"Here," said Halstead simply, shoving the open case into his friend's hands.

"What do you want me to do?" asked Butts.

"Close the case. Fasten the catch."

"Now, light out—skip!" Tom Halstead advised.

"What are you talking about, Tom?"

"Skip. Get away with this plunder. Sell the stuff and do as you like with the money."

"What crazy nonsense are you talking!" Hank blurted.

"Get away, and enjoy yourself to the full. I won't put anyone on your trail. Go as far as you like with the plunder," advised Tom seriously.

"Here, you shut up!" grunted Hank, shoving the case back into Tom's hands. "I'm only a sailor, but I'm no thief!"

" 'I'd love to be a pirate, but I can't stand the smell of blood,' " quoted Captain Halstead.

"Would you really have let me run away with the stuff?" demanded Hank incredulously.

"Yes," replied Halstead gravely.

"I couldn't do such a thing — simply couldn't."

"Don't I know that well enough, Hank? I'd trust you, any day, to guard the vaults of the United States Treasury, with the doors unlocked and no one else looking."

"What are you going to do with that case?"

"I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Wilson to-morrow."

"But to-night?"

"Oh, I'll guard it all right. Now, run along out."

Five minutes later Halstead stepped on to the deck, moving up beside Ted and walking slowly back and forth with him. Out here in the open neither referred to the leather case full of gems.

"I'm getting awfully sleepy," Ted confessed, after a while.

"Turn in, then. I'll call you later if you're wanted for anything."

"Thank you. I believe I will sneak to the berth."

Tom resumed his pacing alone. His mind was too full of crowding thoughts for him to feel like turning in. Midnight was drawing near. Off Lake Michigan came a delayed breeze that soothed him. It was delightful, now, out here in the open. Captain Tom seated himself on the butt to which the bowline of the "Swiftsure" was made fast.

Out of the darkness moved a figure, stealthy as a great cat. Then Crane stood before the boy. The butler was wild-eyed and haggard, but his right hand was steady as he held a pistol.

"Come now, Halstead," he growled, "the jig is up!"

"Going to kill me?" queried Tom, wheeling without rising, and repressing the start that he felt.

"Yes," snarled Crane, "unless——"

"Out with it," Tom ordered crisply, as the butler hesitated.

"Unless you return what you stole from my stateroom to-night!"

"I?" demanded Tom, with splendidly feigned astonishment.

"Don't try to trifle with me!" cried Crane hoarsely. "Just do what I tell you, or you've stood your last watch. I'm a desperate man, and any trifling will be cut short with half a dozen bullets!"

"Crane," asked Tom, eyeing the fellow keenly, "have you been drinking to-night?"

"No, I haven't," rasped the butler. "Halstead, I'm savage and desperate enough without liquor. You're playing with your life! Are you going to do what I tell you?"

"But, see here!" remonstrated Tom, still preserving his air of great astonishment, "you've got to explain yourself. What is it that you want?"

"I've ordered you to give back what you stole from my stateroom to-night," Crane insisted, more angrily than ever. "If you don't do it, without another word, then I'm going to make short work of you!"

There could be no doubt that the fellow meant all he said.

CHAPTER XVII

SKIPPER TOM, MASTER BLUFFER

HOWEVER, Tom appeared only the more puzzled.

"Crane," he remarked, "I'm not a fool, so, of course, I don't want you to shoot me. But I tell you, you'll have to get right down to brass tacks. What is it that you suspect me of having taken from your stateroom to-night?"

"You know well enough!" insisted the other. "Obey, or take lead!"

"Crane, if I really could guess what you're talking about," argued Skipper Halstead, "do you believe I'd throw my life away?"

The butler's answer was to cock the hammer of his revolver.

On deck, unnoticed by either of them, a figure had been moving softly. Hank Butts, dozing lightly in a deck chair, had awakened in time to hear enough to set him in motion.

Around to the port side of the bridge Butts had flitted on tip-toe. Now, he was up on the bridge, one hand on the controlling device of the pneumatic whistle.

"If you've no objection, Cap'n," sounded

Hank's voice, "I'll sound the police call. It will carry a mile on this still night."

"If you sound that whistle just once," warned Crane in a deadly tone, "I'll kill Halstead first, then jump aboard to finish you!"

"Oh, you shut up!" Butts retorted. "I take orders from nobody but the skipper. He hasn't spoken, so here goes for the whistle!"

Though Crane, as he had boasted, was now in a state of desperation that didn't admit of cowardice, Hank's flank movement disconcerted him.

Tom, out of the corner of one eye, saw that the butler was briefly off his guard.

With a roar, Halstead leaped up, his right hand gripping the butler's revolver wrist. Tom threw his whole force into the assault. Down went Crane, with Tom on top of him, in a savage struggle.

Off the bridge came Hank Butts, just as Tom sprang to his feet, the butler's revolver now in his hand.

"Get back!" ordered Butts, as Crane, drawing another revolver, rushed at Tom, who had retreated a few steps.

Crane snarled, but neither turned nor paused. Hank met him on the flank.

Thud!

Down went Crane again, emitting a roar of

pain and anger. The revolver slipped from his hand, and Hank picked it up.

"Foot giving you any trouble?" asked the Long Island boy solicitously.

"You young fiend!" screamed Crane.

Hank Butts was up to his old trick. How he had managed to possess himself of his hitching weight in such a short time was known only to himself. As Crane leaped forward to close with Halstead, Hank Butts had dropped that heavy iron weight, with precision, on the toes of the butler.

"You can take care of him now, Cap'n," said Hank briefly. "I'll jump back and sound the police call on the whistle."

Crane appeared to be concerned mainly with the toes of his right foot. Still seated, the fellow nursed that lamed member.

"Don't touch the whistle," Tom Halstead ordered crisply.

"Aren't you going to turn that fellow over to the police?" queried Hank, halting in astonishment.

"Do you think I'd be mean enough for that?" blurted Tom virtuously. "Crane has been drinking, and doesn't realize what he has been saying or doing. In the morning, as you will see, he won't remember a word of what has taken place to-night. His mind will be a blank.

I'm sorry you hurt him, Hank, though at the same time I'm much obliged, for I know you did it to help me, as you thought. But it was too bad to put the poor wretch in such pain!"

"Say, what kind of a course are you trying to hand me? Do you think I'm waterlogged?" demanded Hank Butts suspiciously. Then he caught a quick gleam in Halstead's eyes and understood that this was all in the line of theatricals.

"All right, then; have your way, Cap'n," growled Butts in pretended surliness. "What do you want me to do? Go and get a doctor and a nurse for this drunken butler?"

"He doesn't need anything but quiet and rest," replied Captain Halstead soothingly. "Help me lift him—easy now!"

"What are we going to do with these bread-mixers?" inquired Butts, holding up the revolver in disgust.

"Take this one I have, too, and throw them both far out into the water," replied Tom. "That's right," as two splashes came from the water at the end of the dock. "Now, help me. Easy! Steady!"

Between them they raised Crane, helping him to stand and to hobble aboard the boat. Between them they got him down to his stateroom door, which the butler had left unlocked after

his last bewildering visit. There they dropped him in his berth, Tom carefully removing the man's shoes.

"Now, I guess he'll sleep off his delusions," Tom confided to Hank, though the words were meant for the butler's ears.

As they stepped up on deck Halstead stood by the companionway entrance.

"Bring me the padlock for this door," he whispered, and Hank brought it. Click! Crane was locked in as securely as he could have been in a jail, for the cabin windows were too small for him to climb through.

"What's the good of turning him over to the police when we have such a good place to keep the fellow?" smiled Halstead.

"But you're playing with fire," Hank protested. "Tom, that fellow has it in for you the worst way, and one of these days he may find himself able to 'get' you."

"Uncle Sam will have him before he gets me," Halstead predicted, with another smile.

"I wish I could be as sure as you are," shuddered Butts.

"What's the matter, Hank? Another bogey chill?"

"Just that and nothing else!"

None the less, young Captain Halstead's sleep that night was sound and restful. He had hid-

den the case of jewels where no one else was likely to find it.

At six the next morning all hands on board turned out—except the passenger locked in the cabin.

In whispers the story went to Joe and Ted as they sat forward in the engine room.

"What are you going to do with Crane this morning?" asked Joe Dawson.

"I'm going to let him sleep as long as he will," Halstead answered.

"Humph! I doubt if the fellow has slept all night," grunted Ted Dyer. "There, listen to that banging!"

From the cabin came a tremendous clatter. The butler was hammering with all his strength against the locked door.

Tom rose, strolling slowly aft.

"Stop that clatter!" he ordered.

"Unlock this door, you young brute!" ordered the butler angrily.

"Crane," called the boyish skipper, "I guess you're the brute. You came down on the dock last night in an awful condition. I don't suppose you've any recollection now of the way you behaved last night. It took all Butts and I could do to subdue you and get you to your stateroom before you kicked a hole in the 'Swiftsure.' We had to lock you up for your own

safety. Now, be a decent fellow—go back and sleep some more."

Bang! clatter, bump! sounded on the cabin door. Crane evidently meant to make all the disturbance he could.

"Open this door!" he yelled insistently.

"If I do," spoke up the young skipper calmly, "it will be only after I've sent for a policeman and he has arrived. Do you want me to send for a policeman?"

"We don't need one," retorted the butler, though he spoke in a more subdued voice. If there was anyone that he *didn't* want to see, it was a policeman.

"I'll send for an officer unless you go back to your berth and get some more sleep," Skipper Halstead threatened coolly.

After that there was silence in the cabin. As Tom wheeled he found Joe quietly grinning over his shoulder.

"Tom," whispered his Kennebec chum admiringly, as he made his way forward, "you're certainly a master bluffer. By and by Crane will actually believe that he was intoxicated last night and that all he did, or thought he did, was part of the nightmare."

"I guess Crane's sore toes feel real enough," muttered Hank, who met them by the bridge.

"The question is," hinted Dawson, "what are you really going to do with the fellow?"

"Just now," Halstead retorted cheerfully, "I'm going to have breakfast as soon as Ted can set it on."

Breakfast over and a few bits of work done, the motor boat boys sat down in the shadiest spot on the deck, for the Chicago morning was a hot one.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SURPRISE AT CUSICK'S

"CAP'N aboard?" called a voice from the dock.

Tom glanced up to behold a young man who indeed looked shabby.

"What can I do for you?" Halstead called.

"Gimme a job," replied the man.

He was a little fellow, apparently somewhere around twenty-eight years of age. His frayed trousers were belted at the waist over a tattered shirt. His bare feet were thrust into low ties that had seen about all the service they would ever do. On the man's head rested a straw hat—or the remains of one—that looked as though it had been filched from an ash-heap. The fellow's whole appearance was woe-begone;

in addition his face and hands were exceedingly grimy.

"What kind of a job could *you* fill?" Tom asked skeptically, as the stranger halted on the string-piece.

"I can do 'most anything aboard a craft like yours," replied the stranger. "There's no vacancy in the job of captain," Tom smiled back at him. "The engineer's post is also filled."

"Don't string me," protested the man hoarsely. "I'm not looking for a job with trimmings. All I want is a job where I can get something to eat. Take me on, and you'll find I can do anything you want."

"Come aboard," invited Tom, rising, "and I'll see if you know the engine room from the mess-room."

"I'll know the mess-room all right!" protested the stranger, springing aboard. "Say, did you ever know what it feels like to be hungry, day after day, and never to know where you're going to get something to eat?"

"No," said Halstead shortly, "and don't pull a sympathy face. This isn't the county almshouse. Come along to the engine room."

Halstead led the way to the engine room.

"Mr. Wilson told me to give you this," whispered the stranger, producing the signet ring that Tom had seen the night before.

"I took you to be the man," Halstead nodded, "or I never would have been as mean to a fellow who said he was hungry. So you came from Mr. Wilson?"

"Just what I said, and this ring ought to prove it," replied the stranger.

"It does," Tom admitted, passing the jewelry back. "And now, what am I to call you while you're on board?"

"Davis—Jim Davis," he replied.

"All right, Davis. Of course you're engaged. Now, as you probably know, you're to be pretty badly abused aboard. You can be as sulky as you like, and you needn't hesitate to let Crane know that you'd enjoy throwing me overboard. That'll help you to make his acquaintance."

"Of course," nodded Jim Davis. "Oh, I'll be a sea lawyer, all right! Captain, how do you like this for a scowl behind your back?"

Jim Davis scowled ferociously, clenching his fist and shaking it.

"Good!" laughed Halstead. "Davis, that scowl frightens me."

"Humph! I don't fight with scowls," retorted Davis.

From a pocket in his frayed trousers he drew forth a sailor's knife, throwing open the blade.

"This is what I'm likely to thrust into your back when I get to hate you enough!"

"Say," smiled Captain Tom, watching the flashing blade, "when you menace my back with that thing please always be sure that you're far enough away from me."

Jim Davis returned the knife to his pocket.

"I understand you're going to knock me about a bit, Cap'n? At least, Mr. Wilson said that would be part of the game."

"Yes—but really I'd hate to hit you hard," grinned Tom. "You don't look as if you could stand much of that sort of thing."

"You'll find that I can," nodded Jim Davis confidently. "Haul off any time you're ready and you'll find me on the job."

"I won't hit you very hard," Tom protested, laughingly. "You can fall just the same."

"Now, see here," remonstrated Davis, "if there's a party on board that you want to fool, don't make it any stage fall for mine when you send me to the deck. I can stand knocks, or Mr. Wilson wouldn't have sent me here. Your hand, Captain."

As Tom held out his right hand Davis seized it in his own right hand. Halstead was quickly compelled to admit that Davis possessed a real "grip." Then the new man rolled up one of his shirt sleeves, displaying an astonishing amount of muscle. Next he picked Tom up as though the latter had been a baby.

"You see, I can stand rough treatment," whispered Davis. "So just slam me about when you're doing it for effect. Well, now, I'm engaged, so I don't mind admitting that I spoke the truth in saying I'm hungry. I haven't eaten a thing since supper time last night."

"There'll be some breakfast on in the mess-room right away," Tom nodded. "In the meantime I'll take you to our engineer, Mr. Dawson."

Joe was found amidships, close to one of the cabin windows, which was open.

"Mr. Dawson," called the young skipper briskly, "here's a tramp sailor, engineer and a little of anything and everything else. Name's Davis, he says. Try him out a bit and see if you think he's worth eight dollars a month and his food."

"Eight dollars a month?" cried Jim Davis. "Why, Cap'n, I always get from thirty-five to forty a month."

"Eight is all you'll get on this craft," Halstead returned sharply. "Is it eight, or do you want to trot ashore again and look for another job?"

"Say, but you're hard on a fellow that has seen a bit of tough luck," protested Davis huskily.

"Shut up!" Halstead roared. "When a man is in hard luck it's generally because he deserves

it. If you don't like the lay-out on this boat, get off! If you stay, you'll have to have a bath this forenoon, and I'll have to buy you seaman's togs, anyway. Confound you, Davis, you start right out by being a burden on our expense account. Ted, give this fellow some coffee and any old thing to eat."

With a contemptuous snort, Tom Halstead walked away, though a sound, heard through an open cabin window, showed that the scene had not been wasted on Crane, for whom it had been intended.

Later, while Davis was stowing away some very real coffee, steak and potatoes in the mess-room, Tom entered, whispering in his ear:

"For some reason Crane brought the case of gems back on board last night."

"Then we know where to get them," smiled Davis.

"I've already got them," Halstead answered. "Crane discovered his loss and hurried ashore. Then he came back here and tried to shoot me up because I pretended I didn't know anything about his loss. That's why he's locked up in the cabin. He'll stay where he is until I get the jewels safely ashore. Now, how shall I get the gems into Mr. Wilson's hands?"

"Go ashore with me, and I'll telephone Mr. Wilson," suggested Davis.

"Good enough! But Crane, from the cabin, can see anyone who goes ashore. I must get that case ashore without his being positive that I have done so."

"Well," smiled Davis, "I would trust a man of your brains, Captain Halstead, to accomplish a little thing like that."

"I think I see how it can be done," Halstead nodded. "All right, then; after breakfast I'm to take you ashore to get you seaman's clothes. At that time we'll telephone Mr. Wilson."

The young skipper next had a few low-uttered words with Ted Dyer. Shortly after, as Tom strolled the deck, Dyer came up to him.

"Tom, give me some money, please," Dyer requested. "I'm going ashore, marketing. We're out of fresh vegetables."

On one arm Ted carried a covered market basket.

"Five dollars enough?" Halstead asked.

"Plenty," nodded Ted, and took the money, going up on to the dock and down toward the street.

All this had been done where the imprisoned butler could overhear and also see. In the bottom of the basket Dyer carried the case containing the gems.

Then Davis came up on deck.

"Well, you are a ragamuffin," uttered Tom, in a tone of disgust, as he stared at the new deck hand.

"You said you'd tog me out," answered Davis.

"Don't give me any back talk, Davis," ordered Tom gruffly. "I know what I promised you. Come along. I'll get you the togs now."

They started ashore, side by side, but Tom wheeled on Davis angrily.

"What are you trying to walk with me for, my man? Fall astern!"

So Davis went off the dock in Halstead's wake. Up on the nearest street Ted Dyer awaited them. He produced the long, morocco case, which Tom slipped into the inner pocket of his uniform coat.

Then he and Davis hurried along.

"I'll ask Mr. Wilson to come down to Cusick's to meet us," murmured Davis. "That's a very good little hotel near here, where lake skippers and mates put up when on shore."

They were soon at the entrance to Cusick's Hotel. The lobby proved to be deserted, even the clerk being absent from the desk.

"I'll slip into the booth," whispered Davis, "and 'phone. It won't take Mr. Wilson long to show up after he gets word from me."

While the undersized customs man was in

the telephone booth, Tom Halstead strolled through the lobby. There was an open door at the further end, and Tom, reaching it, stepped outside curiously into an alley-way.

Just as he did so he heard a quick step behind him. Like a flash Halstead glanced about—but too late.

He saw an arm raised above his head. Then something struck him, and the young captain's mind left him. As he fell and lay on the pavement of the alley, Tom's assailant bent over him, feverishly unbuttoning his blue uniform coat.

CHAPTER XIX

TOM HALSTEAD IS "FIERCE"

A SMALL but intensely active figure shot across the lobby of Cusick's.

The man bending over Halstead, with every nerve strained, heard that sound of flying feet.

For a fraction of a second the assailant wheeled about as though he intended to attack the newcomer. Instead, he turned, darting through the alley into the crowded street.

But Davis did not pursue. He halted over Halstead's unconscious figure. His first care was to feel Tom's pulse.

"Alive, but no telling how badly he has been done up!" muttered the little customs man.

His second act was to thrust a hand inside Tom's coat, satisfying himself that the case had not been abstracted.

At that moment other steps were heard in the lobby. Glancing in through the open door Davis saw the day clerk returning.

"Give a hand here, friend, or get help," ordered Davis quickly. "On the whole, I think you'd better give the help yourself. Get a room key and lead the way upstairs."

As the clerk knew Davis he didn't bother to ask a lot of foolish questions. Instead, the young man hastened over to the desk, got a room key and then returned.

"My friend has had an accident," explained Davis glibly. "I was in the telephone booth when I looked out through the glass door and saw him fall."

By this time they were bearing Halstead to a room upstairs. Once in the room they laid the young skipper on the bed.

"Shall I send for a doctor?" asked the clerk.

"I'll let you know if it's going to be necessary," nodded Davis. "I know something about taking care of injured people, as you know."

So the clerk went away, asking no further questions. Jim Davis removed Halstead's coat,

next throwing the front of his shirt open. Tom's head was bathed, Davis frequently watching the rate of his pulse.

Some ten minutes later the motor boat boy opened his eyes.

"Ran up against a surprise, didn't you?" smiled Davis, seated beside him.

"Yes," admitted Tom, with a crestfallen air. "The case——?"

"It's here," nodded the little customs man. "Your assailant didn't have time to get away with it. Through the glass in the door of the booth I saw that something was happening to you, and it didn't take me long to guess where I was most needed."

"Did you get a good look at the fellow?" asked Halstead eagerly.

"Hardly, for he was in the alley and hit you from behind. All I saw was an arm, and some sort of short club. Then I got in motion."

"You caught him?"

"I'm sorry to say that I didn't," Davis confessed. "Didn't even try, in fact. What would have been the use? The fellow was in the street by the time that I reached the alley. I couldn't have picked him out of the crowd, and you didn't seem to be in any shape to help me."

"I've been a fool," sighed Tom wearily. "I should have had brains enough to know that

Crane would be sure to have confederates on shore. He came to town last night, as soon as he discovered his loss. So, of course, I've been watched and trailed. Do you know, Davis, I've a curious notion that I half recognized my assailant just as I tried to turn on him. It must have been a hazy dream, though, for the man is hardly likely to be in Chicago."

"Who did you think it was that hit you?" asked the customs man.

"It strikes me, though I didn't have more than a sixteenth of a look at him, that the fellow looked like Carroll Phillips. However, we left that man up on an island in Georgian Bay, so it's hardly likely that he could be in Chicago."

"I don't know that his being here is so very improbable," mused Davis. "But how's your head?"

"Sore, and I deserve it," confessed Tom, with a sheepish grin.

"Your turning saved you from the full force of that club. Do you feel like sitting up?"

"I feel like doing anything that would rouse me to more energy," Halstead retorted. He made a move to sit up, Davis's arm supporting him.

"My head is fearfully dizzy just now," Tom complained, "but I'll move about a bit and see if I can't straighten myself out."

A few minutes later there came five low knocks at the door. Jim Davis sprang to turn the key and throw the door open. Deputy Collector Wilson entered, locking the door behind him.

"Here are the gems, sir," whispered Davis, producing the morocco case. "We came near not having them, though. An attempt was made to kill and rob Captain Halstead."

Mr. Wilson listened to the brief account, then took the case to a table, opening it.

"Whew!" whistled the deputy collector, as the number, size and beauty of the gems dawned upon him.

"A pretty fine haul, sir, isn't it?" Halstead asked, standing behind the deputy's chair.

"Fine? It's the biggest haul of its kind ever made by our department at Chicago," replied Mr. Wilson, with emphasis. "Let me do some crude appraising."

Paper and pencil beside him, Mr. Wilson spent about half an hour in examining and listing the gems.

"Captain Halstead," declared the deputy collector, wheeling around, "I doubt if you have any conception of the value of this haul. These stones I roughly appraise as being worth between five and six hundred thousand dollars!"

"I thought it would be something like that," said Tom simply.

"Then, Captain Halstead, you have written yourself down as a wholly honest man," the official continued. "Many a man, having a treasure like this in his hands, would have tried to get away to some other place with it."

"Not for mine!" Tom cried.

"Now, tell me in more detail than Mr. Davis could offer over the wire, just how you came to seize this Arabian Nights treasure."

Captain Tom Halstead told the story, briefly, just as the thing had happened.

"So you have Crane locked up in the cabin of the boat?" Mr. Wilson demanded.

"Yes; and I'm afraid it will get me into trouble with the police, if I keep him locked in there much longer. Of course I have no legal right to hold prisoners."

"If Crane makes any trouble you call on us, and we'll explain the matter to the satisfaction of the police," the deputy collector promised. "In any event, don't let Crane out of the cabin until you positively have to do it. The longer he stays where he is the longer it will be before he can communicate with confederates on shore."

"All right, sir, as long as I have official sanction behind my act in keeping the fellow a pris-

oner on board," Skipper Tom nodded. "I hope you'll permit me to explain my act to Mr. Potter, the owner of the boat."

"Tell the owner all you have to tell him," agreed Mr. Wilson. "Henry Potter is an honorable man, and will keep quiet."

"Now, what shall I do, Mr. Wilson?"

"I want you to help me, as far as you may be able, to catch this whole daring gang," replied the deputy collector. "I can't give you any very definite instructions, but Mr. Davis represents me. If he is on the boat he will tell you whatever it may be necessary for you to do. And now, I must get these jewels to the Customs House and lock them up. Captain, I don't know how to thank you."

There was a hearty leave-taking, after which Halstead and Davis went to an outfitting shop. Jim Davis was soon attired in a seaman's uniform; he also carried a bag containing extra items of clothing. But Davis paid for his outfit with Uncle Sam's expense money.

Then they returned to the yacht.

"Crane keeps asking for you, Captain," reported Hank Butts, with a grin. So Tom went to one of the cabin windows.

"Are you comfortable, Crane?" he called.

"Yes; but I want to get out of this pen," growled the butler.

"I am not going to let you out until Mr. Potter comes on board," Tom replied firmly.

"Then I'll make it hot for you with the police," threatened the butler.

"Take my advice, and don't," Halstead hinted. "Crane, I don't believe you've much idea of what you did last night when you came back to the boat."

"I don't remember much, and that's a fact," agreed the butler craftily.

"You committed a rather deadly assault on me," Halstead continued. "It took both Mr. Butts and myself to subdue you. Crane, if you attempt to interest the police in the fact that you're locked up in the cabin, I'll even matters by having you arrested on a charge of attempted murder. We've plenty of proof of the charge. Now, do you choose to be good?"

"I'll have to be," came the sullen answer, as Crane turned away from the cabin window and went back into his stateroom. "Is Halstead really fool enough to believe that I was intoxicated last night, and that I don't know, now, what I did then? If that's so, then did Halstead really get hold of the missing case? For that matter, is it really missing? Haven't I overlooked it somewhere in this stateroom?"

With that the butler began industriously to search once more.

It was four o'clock that afternoon when Mr. and Mrs. Potter came aboard the "Swiftsure." The speculator looked weary and dispirited indeed. Mrs. Potter appeared more worried than Halstead had ever seen her before.

"I wonder if the market is running hard against Mr. Potter?" thought Tom.

Then he led the owner and his wife forward of the bridge, where he told them, as briefly as he could, of Crane's strange activities.

"A scoundrel, is he?" demanded Mr. Potter indignantly. "Then I guess the best thing I can do will be to discharge him at once, and send him ashore."

"Crane wouldn't attempt to do anything against you and Mrs. Potter," Tom declared. "So, if you'll permit it, I'd like to keep him with us for the present, but keep him locked in the cabin until we're under way, so that he can't communicate with anyone on shore."

"Is this a new man you have on board?" asked Mr. Potter, indicating Davis.

"A customs man, 'hired' at the request of the deputy collector," Halstead answered. "By the way, sir, don't be astonished if at any time you see me rebuke Davis and then knock him down. It's a part of the programme, sir."

Mr. Potter turned to his wife with a forced smile, as he said:

"Helen, my dear, after what I've been through on shore, this new play that's being enacted aboard the 'Swiftsure' ought to come as a relief."

Mrs. Potter laughed, but Tom Halstead felt sure that he detected the note of pain in that fine woman's voice.

Five minutes later the "Swiftsure," with the butler still penned up in the cabin, was backing out of the slip. Then she turned her nose about, headed back to Georgian Bay.

Hank was on the bridge, steering the craft through waters that he now knew very well. Tom was standing just forward of the bridge when Henry Potter stepped to his side, resting a hand heavily on the lad's shoulder.

"Halstead, whatever you do when you're older," urged the rich man, "don't ever bet a dollar on the market!"

"Is the market running badly, sir?" asked Captain Tom.

"I haven't had the courage to tell my wife yet," whispered the boat's owner hoarsely, "but the next week's developments may clean me out."

"As rich a man as you, sir?" gasped Tom, staring at his employer in amazement.

"Richer men than I have sometimes drifted out on the ebb tide of the market," declared

Mr. Potter, clenching his hands. "O Tom Halstead, I've been a fool, an idiot, an insane man. Speculation always ends thus. You're happy, lad. I wish *I* had learned boating, as you have done—or had taken up with some other useful employment."

"How soon am I going to be able to get to my cabin, Captain?" inquired Mrs. Potter, joining them and smiling wistfully at her husband.

"I'll let Crane out now, Mrs. Potter," replied Captain Tom, lifting his cap and walking astern.

Then suddenly he raised his voice:

"Davis, you infernal landlubber, why are you wasting your time?" Tom Halstead roared.

Clenching his fist he struck the seeming deck hand down.

"Hey, you'll find you can't treat me like this!" growled Davis.

"Get up and I'll knock you down again, you lubber!" retorted Skipper Tom, a world of pretended contempt in his voice.

Then he strode a few feet further aft and unlocked the cabin door.

"Come out, Crane," Tom called gruffly. "Mr. Potter wants to talk to you."

CHAPTER XX

DAVIS TELLS CRANE SOME NEWS

"CRANE, what's this I've heard of you?" demanded Henry Potter, eyeing the butler sternly. "Intoxicated last night, and attempting a deadly assault on Captain Halstead and Mr. Butts!"

"I—I haven't a recollection of it, now, sir," lied the butler craftily. "I never did such a thing before, sir. I hope you won't discharge me."

"I shall not commit myself on that point, just now," declared the owner of the "Swift-sure."

"Crane, I find it difficult to believe such a thing of you," remarked Mrs. Potter.

"I find it hard to believe myself, ma'am," lied the butler meekly.

"You're limping," remarked Mr. Potter, as Crane moved about.

"Yes, sir; something happened to my foot this morning. I can't account for it."

"You must have gotten into some accident, then, on shore, don't you think?" quizzed the owner.

"Yes, sir; not a doubt about it," pretended

the wretch. "Well, sir, nothing of the sort shall ever happen again."

"Crane, you will serve us with dinner promptly at six o'clock."

"Yes, madam; what will you have?"

"Whatever Mr. Dyer can best supply. You will now go to the kitchen"—Mrs. Potter could seldom remember the word, "galley"—"and give Mr. Dyer whatever help he may need."

"Yes, madam."

"Except for the limp that impeded his gait somewhat, Crane now looked the regulation English servant. He took Ted's orders below as though he had always been used to deferring to the motor boat boys.

At six the dinner was served in the cabin. Tom Halstead, as the craft's commander, sat at the head of the table—a sea formality that Mr. Potter always expected when aboard.

Late that night, when Mrs. Potter had turned in, Henry Potter came on deck. Ted was on the bridge, now, while Halstead was dozing in a deck chair astern. He roused, however, at the sound of steps and came promptly to his feet.

"Keep your seat, Captain," said the owner, as he pulled up another chair beside Tom, took out a cigar and lighted it.

"You don't smoke, Captain Halstead?"

"No, sir; never made the start."

"You think it a foolish habit, I suppose?"

"Frankly, sir, I do."

"I imagine that you are right, Captain. Men do many things that are utterly foolish. I have another bad habit—speculation. Halstead, the last week in the Pit at Chicago has been the most feverish battle in which I've ever been engaged."

"You're in grains, then?" Tom inquired.

"And also in industrial stocks," confided Mr. Potter. "The times are uneasy, but I thought I saw a big upward tendency to the market. I thought I was going to make millions!"

"And you didn't, sir."

"I fancy I'm going to lose them, instead," replied Mr. Potter. "In fact, Captain, I'm not at present sure that I shall be able to keep this boat after the crash comes. I shall be fortunate, indeed, if I don't have to take a clerkship. I shall have to become a small wage-earner. This may be the last trip that I shall be able to enjoy as the owner of this craft. If it comes to that, Captain, I shall feel extremely sorry that I brought you here to the Great Lakes, only to have to drop your services so early in the season."

"Don't let that small item bother you in the

least, sir," spoke up Tom Halstead heartily. "We members of the Motor Boat Club are all of us fairly comfortable, in that we all have savings. Besides, our services are much in demand. If our club had four times as many members we could always place promptly all who fell out of work."

"There is one who will suffer most of all," groaned Mr. Potter. "I am speaking of my poor wife. I should have heeded her advice long ago, and have dropped all further speculation. In that case we would still be rich, and with enough to last us all our lives."

"Are you sure that you have encountered serious loss?" Tom inquired sympathetically.

"It all depends," replied Henry Potter, "on the showing of the market for the next three or four days. If there is a steady downward drift, then I shall be ruined. If the unexpected happens, and a rise comes instead, then I shall be richer than before—and out of speculation forever! But I do not look for the fortunate turn of affairs—and I am in deeper than ever I have been before. My poor wife!"

"I imagine, sir, that she will mind the shock very little." Tom declared in all sincerity. "In a way I believe that Mrs. Potter will be glad when you have lost so much money that you won't be able to speculate any more. I think

that she would prefer poverty to the life of constant strain and excitement that you have been living for years."

At this moment a rustle was heard on the companionway steps. Mrs. Potter, clad in a dressing gown over which she had thrown a long cloak, stepped up on deck.

Tom sprang to his feet, placing a chair for her. Mrs. Potter studied her husband's face.

"Henry," she said presently, "it is useless to try to conceal from me the fact that you are in straits. I know that, for I have been following the market in the newspapers. I do not mind trouble in the least, if it is coming to us, but for a husband in adversity I must have a strong man with a clear head. And so I am going to order you to your berth. Do not attempt to rise before seven in the morning. Sleep all the time if you possibly can. Will you turn in now? I will take your place on deck, and will chat with Captain Halstead, if I am not keeping him from his own rest."

"I shall not turn in for at least two hours yet," Halstead answered. "The weather has been thickening a bit, and I shall remain above until certain lights have been passed."

Mr. Potter passed below.

"My husband has been talking to you of his impending ruin?" queried the wife.

"Er—er—I——" stammered Halstead.

"I understand," smiled Mrs. Potter. "You do not want to break a confidence, and I respect you for it, Captain. But my husband's affairs are not half as much of a secret from me as he supposes. Now, Captain, I am going to favor you with a confidence of my own."

Bending closer Mrs. Potter whispered:

"I hope to see Henry forced to the very bottom of his resources, where he has called upon his last dollar!"

Tom Halstead glanced in very frank amazement at the handsome woman.

"Oh, not too far below his resources," added Mrs. Potter, with a little laugh. "But I want to see him crowded so badly that he cannot help himself. In fact, I have been praying for that very thing, Captain Halstead. You may have noted that, while Mr. Potter is very much excited, I am very calm. In fact, the only eagerness I feel is to see him crowded to the very wall in the market. It will be the most fortunate thing for us both—as you will see when the crash comes."

As he listened Captain Halstead was not a little troubled in his own mind. He was beginning to wonder if the strain of the last few days had upset the balance of Helen Potter's brain.

After that, however, she chatted easily on so many topics that Tom presently began to feel sure that the woman at his side was not under any severe mental strain.

Finally Mrs. Potter rose, saying:

"I am going below to see if my husband sleeps."

Like an anxious mother she flitted below. The smile on her face was beautiful when she stole up to deck again.

"My husband is sleeping like a tired schoolboy, and for the first time in a week, I am certain. Now, I am wholly contented, and I am going to enjoy this fine night air. Your arm, Captain Halstead, if you are not going to be otherwise engaged."

Together they strolled the deck for half an hour. Mrs. Potter did not once mention the market again, but appeared to be, as she had claimed, wholly easy in her mind.

"It's odd how some wealthy women fancy they would enjoy poverty," mused Tom, after he had left Mrs. Potter at the cabin companionway. "My good mother could tell Mrs. Potter that poverty is not unalloyed joy. Thank goodness the dear mother doesn't have to know, though, what poverty is in *these* days, when the Motor Boat Club is such a flourishing institution."

As the young skipper moved forward he thought he detected a slight movement under the tarpaulin that covered the small boat at the davits. Investigating, he found Jim Davis stretched out there.

"What does this mean?" Tom asked in a low voice.

"Only that I'm on watch in case the butler tries to come on deck to-night," whispered the little customs man. "If he thought the decks were clear he might try to signal some passing craft, or some point on shore. I'm here to see him if he does."

"If you're remaining awake all night," murmured Halstead, "I shall not call on you for any very important duties to-morrow."

"Call on me for all you like, Captain," responded Jim Davis. "This won't be the first time that I've been good for thirty or forty hours' work at a stretch."

Jim Davis had his watch for nothing that night. Crane kept to his own stateroom.

After a swift, uneventful trip, the "Swiftsure" came to anchor in the little bay of Penman's Island, and the Potters went ashore.

After lunch, a little before arrival, Jim Davis aided Crane in washing dishes in the galley.

"A bullying young brute, this Captain!" Davis took occasion to growl.

"Well, if you don't like the fellow, why do you stay on board?" asked the butler cunningly. "He knocked you down again this morning. Why do you stay, my man?"

"Why do I stay?" repeated Davis. "Say, you're no friend of this Captain, are you?"

"Not especially," replied Crane grimly.

"Then I'll tell you why I'm staying," Davis went on, with a good deal of resentful energy in his tone. "I'm staying because I'm living in hopes of getting even with this Captain!"

Crane's eyes sparkled at hearing the news.

CHAPTER XXI

HANK FEELS BOGEYISH, BUT—

HAVING snatched two hours' sleep at last, Jim Davis went ashore on Penman's Island just after dark.

"I feel like turning in early myself," yawned Hank Butts.

"I'm afraid you won't, though, to-night," smiled Halstead.

"Why not?"

"Because we're slated to have things happen to-night."

"Such as what?"

"We may do some cruising, Hank."

"Owner coming aboard?"

"No."

"Is his wife?"

"No. But what would you say, Hank, if we should do some on our own account? How's your bogey chill to-night?"

"Nothing doing in the chill line," Butts rejoined. "Never felt more comfortable than I do to-night."

"Just the same, we're going to try to run afoul of the 'F. D.' to-night," Skipper Tom informed him.

"'The Flying Dutchman'?"

"Yes; I've a few notions about that craft. I've talked them over with Davis, and the result is that we're going to drift up lazily by Twin Islands to-night."

"You're going to hunt the 'F. D.,' then?" Hank Butts wanted to know.

"Just that," nodded Halstead. "We're going to try to flush that craft up, to use a hunter's phrase, and then we're going to try to run her down."

"Want any advice?" asked Hank quizzically.

"If it's good," Tom nodded.

"Then keep faithfully away from the 'F. D.' Never hunt her unless she hunts you first. Tom Halstead, you're the kind of fellow, once you

start a thing, to follow right through to the end. Now, if the 'F. D.' looms up ahead of us to-night, and then we see her stern light vanishing under the waves, you're just the kind of fellow to follow her straight to the bottom of Georgian Bay before you'll give up the chase. So be good, and stay at your moorings."

"We're going out," Tom retorted, with a click of his jaws. "But I'll tell you what we'll do, Hank. We'll put you ashore before we up-anchor. There's a chambermaid up at the house that Mrs. Potter will loan us. The girl isn't so very brave, but she has no superstitious fears. A girl would be of more use on this boat than a fellow who believes in ghostly things."

"What are you talking about?" rumbled Hank. "Do you mean to hint that I'm afraid of anything that walks or floats?"

"Just as you say. Of course we'll be glad to have you go with us if you feel certain that you won't lose your nerve."

"Of course I'll go," grumbled young Butts. "At the same time, I have a right to register my opinion that it's foolish to go chasing after 'Flying-Dutchmen' craft."

Tom walked away smiling. He always knew how to handle Hank's cranky or superstitious moods. It having been hinted to Hank that he was afraid, Butts could now be depended upon

to follow any adventure through, even though it promised the gravest dangers.

An hour later Butts sauntered up to the young captain to ask:

"What time do you start, Tom?"

"Oh, not earlier than ten o'clock, anyway."

"Humph! You don't want to find the 'F. D.' very badly, I guess. You won't get there before 10.30, and that's later than we've seen the ghost craft before."

"If we don't find the ghost craft, then you'll be a lot better satisfied, won't you, Hank?"

"No, sirree!" exploded Butts. "If we start on the fool chase I won't be satisfied with anything less than bringing the 'F. D.' back in tow."

Butts soon withdrew to take a brief nap. When Ted Dyer called him, at half past ten, however, Hank made speed to get on deck.

Davis had returned by this time, and the small boat hung at the "Swiftsure's" davits.

Around Penman's Island the "Swiftsure" loafed at a speed of ten miles an hour. Butts was at the wheel, Tom by his side, while Jim Davis and Ted Dyer lounged in deck chairs forward of the bridge.

Though Hank was curious, Tom had little to say until the Twin Islands loomed up ahead through the darkness.

"Shall I turn on the searchlight to pick up the channel?" Hank asked.

"Not for a minute, even!" Halstead rejoined almost sharply. "We have our running lights out, to be sure, but we don't particularly care to advertise our coming to those who may be on Phillips's Island."

"Why? Are you going to land there?"

"Something like that," Tom nodded.

"You think that the answer to the 'Flying-Dutchman' mystery is going to be found on that island?" sniffed Hank.

"I do," Halstead assented. "The 'Flying Dutchman' must have some connection with Phillips, who is a member of the gem-smuggling gang. So, to run down a mystery connected with Phillips, what could be better than to pay a visit to his island? And I have it from Mr. Potter that Phillips' domain is seldom visited by anyone. He has never been very hospitable to callers, so probably his island contains some features that he doesn't care to display to the curious. Keep right on through the middle of the channel, and then follow a due north course until I change the order."

Knowing that Hank was wholly familiar with the channel, Halstead now left the bridge. Going below, he spoke to Ted Dyer, then to Davis. Ted soon made his way to the bridge.

"What are *you* doing up here?" Hank asked curiously.

"I'm your relief when the order comes," Dyer answered. "Whee! But I'm sorry I'm not one of those picked to go ashore."

"Tom seems to think that I'm afraid of to-night's business," returned Hank.

"Maybe we all will be afraid before we're through with to-night's business," laughed young Dyer.

"Woof!" retorted Hank scornfully.

Through the channel and out into the open again went the "Swiftsure." Half a mile beyond Twin Islands Tom called out:

"Help me at the boat, Hank."

Both took their station at the davits, lowering the little craft alongside and towing her by the bowline.

"Overboard with you, Hank!" called the young skipper.

Butts picked up his uniform coat, which he had rolled into a semblance of a ball. Then he dropped into the small boat, and Jim Davis followed. Last of all came Tom Halstead. Joe had come out of the engine room to watch.

"Cast us off, Joe!" Tom called quietly.

The bowline came aboard, the small boat rapidly falling astern. Hank picked up the oars, while Tom took the tiller.

"Row easily, Hank, and, above all, with as little noise as possible. We don't have to make speed, for there's no hurry."

"Where's the 'Swiftsure' going?" asked Butts, as the motor boat kept on her way, growing smaller and smaller in the distance.

"She's going on until she's out of sight," Halstead answered. "She won't be back this way before half past two in the morning. She didn't stop at all, so that anyone watching her from Phillips's cottage wouldn't have any idea that our boat had landed passengers, or was about to do so."

"It would make us feel foolish, though, if anyone on either of the Twin Islands suddenly turned a searchlight on us, wouldn't it?" chuckled Butts dryly.

"It surely would," Tom admitted. "But I don't believe it will happen. Now, stop talking, for voices carry far over the water on a quiet night like this."

"It won't be a quiet night very long," Hank returned in a whisper, as distant lightning began to show in the north. "It's going to be a regular old witches' night before midnight."

Up on Phillips's Island, as the small boat drew nearer, no light showed. Perhaps, as it was now after eleven at night, whoever dwelt on the island had turned in for the night.

"I hope they all have turned in," muttered Tom, as the thought occurred to him.

The point for which he steered was at about the middle of the north shore of the island.

"Stop rowing a minute," whispered Tom suddenly. "What's that coming?"

It proved to be the steady chug-chug of a motor boat coming from the southward.

"Row for all you're worth," whispered Tom suddenly. "That craft is in the channel, and she may be heading for the same place we are!"

A few minutes later a motor boat rounded the island and came along. It was the "Flying Dutchman"—not a doubt about that!

CHAPTER XXII

THE NIGHT FOR SECRETS

BY this time the "Swiftsure's" small boat had beached and her crew of three had drawn the little shell well up inside a fringe of bushes at the coast.

"Jupiter! That's the very craft that vanished once and sank another time before our very eyes!" whispered Hank, as a brighter flash of lightning revealed the oncoming motor boat.

The stranger carried her masthead and side lights, but they were burning dimly, as though

the boat's master did not care to be sighted from any great distance.

"They're going to put in!" whispered Jim Davis, who had not spoken before.

"Unless the boat suddenly goes up in a luminous puff of smoke," murmured Hank with an air of affected indifference.

"All I have to say," whispered Halstead, "is that we're likely to know something soon—something that we don't as yet know."

Now the strange craft passed them, not more than two hundred feet out from shore. No lightning favoring, the beholders on shore could make out merely that a man's head showed near the wheel. It was too dark to see what he looked like.

"By Neptune! That boat is putting in toward shore!" whispered Tom Halstead, taking a step forward. "What on earth are they going to do—run the boat straight against that cliff?"

"It wouldn't hurt that kind of a boat," Hank Butts declared. "Watch, and probably you'll see her go straight through the cliff—without any sound like a collision."

Hardly had he spoken when the thing happened!

All three of the hidden watchers gasped for an instant.

"Jupiter!" groaned Hank. "Now tell me

that 'Flying Dutchman' is just an ordinary motor boat well handled!"

"It was well handled, all right," Tom declared stubbornly. "And there was nothing supernatural about her going through the cliff. Depend upon that. You'll see that I'm right when we nose around over there."

"You're going over there?" asked Hank incredulously.

"After waiting here for about ten minutes, to give the crew of that boat a chance to get away," Tom declared.

"You are?" gasped Hank. Then added, resignedly, "Oh, well, then, all right!"

Jim Davis laughed quietly. He was one of the cleverest secret service men in the customs service, and had run down other mysteries nearly as puzzling as the present one.

Flare! The sheet of lightning that now lit up the skies was a dazzlingly brilliant one. Almost immediately the crash of thunder followed.

"We're going to have one jolly good wetting!" grumbled Hank.

"It won't hurt us," Halstead declared.

"Oh, no; I suppose not," admitted Hank. "But, somehow, it makes this strange business all the more grisly."

"Come along," advised Halstead, after a

pause. He took the lead up the slope of a hillside, heading in the general direction of the cliff through which the "Flying Dutchman" had disappeared.

Soon big drops of rain began to fall. Then came a deluge. The lightning now continued almost without interval. The thunder sent crashing echoes through the cliffs at this end of the island.

"This light will show us up," grumbled Hank, who had already put on the jacket that he had brought with him.

"If it doesn't, then it will help us to find what we're looking for," Halstead rejoined. "This way. I think I see the place we're trying to locate."

Past several big rocks Tom now led his companions. They came to a passage at the rear of a cleft.

"Wait for the next flash," Captain Tom whispered. "Then let us see what we shall see below."

Nor was that flash long in coming. It seemed to light up the whole sky, lasting several seconds, and throwing a glowing light below.

Beyond them the three prowlers beheld a path leading steeply down to a large pool of water behind the face of the cliff.

In the water there lay the "Flying Dutch-

man'' craft, a heavy canvas hood drawn over her.

''I'll lead the way,'' Tom Halstead whispered, as he started down the steep, rock-strewn path. ''If I break my neck that will serve as a warning to you two.''

More lightning aided them to make their way below. At last Halstead ran out on the narrow shingle of beach at the foot of the path. But the cliff still loomed up before them. Though the strange motor craft lay in this enclosed body of water, it was not at all plain how she had been gotten there.

''Look out!'' growled Hank, as Halstead waded out a few feet into the water and rested a hand on the gunwale of the puzzling craft.

''What's the matter?'' called Tom, looking back.

''Don't lay a hand on anything ghostly.''

Tom chuckled.

''You'll find this all good, hard wood and iron, Butts, my boy. Wade out and have a try for yourself.''

''I don't know as I'm particular,'' Hank half objected.

''You ought to be willing to take a chance at anything—once,'' Halstead smilingly rebuked him.

Jim Davis now not only waded alongside the

craft, but he unfastened enough of the hood to permit himself to climb into the craft.

"You see, Hank," the young skipper called derisively, "it's a real enough boat. Nothing vapory except the water under it."

Hank thereupon ranged alongside the craft.

From the inside Davis had loosened enough more of the hood so that he could see his way about the "Flying Dutchman." Thus he discovered a bull's-eye lantern and lighted it.

"Be careful not to throw any rays of light up toward the house," Tom warned him.

"The house can't be seen from here," Davis answered, "so I don't believe anyone at the house can see down this way. But there are three of us, anyway."

"Perhaps you are armed, Davis," Tom hinted.

"No; I'm not. Though a Secret Service man, I have usually found that weapons are a nuisance."

"We're not armed, either," Halstead assured him, "so we might be at a big disadvantage if certain persons found us here. Let me have the lantern."

The uncovered portion of the "Flying Dutchman" was aft. Lantern in hand, Halstead now entered the cabin forward. After a few moments he called his companions.

"Look at this thing," he urged.

"What is it?" Hank demanded curiously.

"It's the thing that you mistook for a sinking motor boat," Tom chuckled.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHASE THAT STARTED LATE

THE "thing" to which Tom Halstead had directed attention rested on the floor of the cabin.

In general shape the object looked like one of the red buoys that are used to mark channel and harbor courses for the benefit of mariners.

This buoy was a small one, however—one that would not contain more than three gallons of liquid at the most.

From the upper end projected an iron rod, ending in a hook at the top.

"Do you see how the 'Flying Dutchman' sank before our eyes one night, Hank?" Tom Halstead demanded.

"Not quite," Butts admitted.

"Don't you remember saying, that night, that the 'Flying Dutchman' had stopped her speed?"

"Yes," Butts admitted.

"At the time we had been following this boat's

stern light. We didn't use the searchlight because it didn't seem necessary."

"I remember," nodded Hank.

"Well, when we thought the 'Flying Dutchman' had stopped she had merely extinguished her own stern light and had dropped this buoy overboard with a lantern hung at the hook at the end. Not this buoy, really, of course, but another just like it."

"But buoys float," remarked Hank. "The one we saw didn't."

"Because the buoy that we saw sink had a valve like the one you see here," Tom argued, pointing to the object before them. "The valve admits water, and presently buoy, lantern and all sink under the waves."

"And this valve is made to be regulated so that the time in which the buoy will sink can be nicely adjusted," added Jim Davis, going down on his knees beside the buoy.

"Bosh! It's easy, when you understand, isn't it?" Hank demanded shame-facedly.

"I never did imagine that there was anything much more supernatural about it," Tom declared. "And, Hank, if you also remember, on that night that the buoy sank, this boat was close to islands on our course. We tried to pick this boat up again with our searchlight, but she was able to keep out of our sight."

"How did this boat ever get in here through the cliff?" Hank challenged.

"The main fact is that she's here," Halstead answered. "If we have time we'll also find the answer to your question. Depend upon it, there's some perfectly explainable way of bringing the craft through the cliff."

"How about that rock that loomed up under our bow, yet did us no harm? The rock that we couldn't find afterwards, either?"

"I don't know now," Tom admitted. "Yet, depend upon it, the answer will be wholly simple when we do know. You'll admit that this boat we're aboard is no ghostly craft, but merely one fitted up with tricks?"

"Either that or I'm dreaming," grunted Butts.

Jim Davis had been saying little, but prowled about on his own account. He did not, however, make any sensational discoveries.

"There's one thing we may be certain of, anyway," declared the little customs man, "this boat is berthed at Phillips's Island, and is undoubtedly his own boat. Anyway, it will be of no use for him to deny that he knows all about the boat. If he does, he also knows that she has been used by the gem-smuggling gang. That as good as convicts him of belonging to the gang."

"But he is now under Canadian jurisdiction," smiled Skipper Tom. "Unless he goes to the United States, and gets caught there, then he will go scot-free."

"He'll go to the United States sooner or later," replied Davis. "It's only a question of time when we'll catch him there."

"I should think that smuggling highly dutiable articles across the Canadian border into the United States would be a pretty easy proposition," remarked Hank. "It seems to me that I can think of fifty different ways of getting gems or other highly dutiable articles across the border, without being caught."

"It looks that way to a lot of people," laughed Jim Davis softly. "And it might be easy if Uncle Sam didn't keep a host of secret agents abroad, who keep the United States Government posted on the dutiable articles that are being bought. In the end, we run down and imprison every man or woman who tries the game and keeps in it long enough. This gem-smuggling gang has been busy for four months, and we now know enough to imprison every member of it as soon as we can catch them on United States soil."

"I want to get out of here," interposed Tom, "and see if I can't find out how this boat gets in through the face of the cliff."

Before they left the boat the three prowlers carefully fastened the hood in place again. But Davis kept the bull's-eye lantern for the present.

Under the canvas hood and in the cabin they had heard the rain beating down. Now they faced almost a deluge from the skies as they waded ashore. The lightning was becoming even brighter, while the crashing of the thunder made them think of an artillery duel.

On the beach, Tom and his friends stumbled along through the darkness, except when a flash of lightning made their path clearer.

"Humph! There's a shed down there," Tom called back over his shoulder and pointing ahead.

The little building lay almost concealed in a tiny grove. But now the three raced toward it.

The building had no windows, but the single door proved to be unlocked. All three entered.

"Oh, you rocks!" Tom called joyously, while Hank Butts muttered:

"Jupiter! Rocks? May I be dingswizzled for life!"

The mystery was instantly clear.

The interior of that shed looked like a scene-painter's loft. There were several rolls of khaki-colored canvas in sight. There was a carpenter's bench at which framework could be built. There were a few cans of paint such as

scene shifters use. All these things were revealed as Davis flashed the light over the place.

"Humph!" remarked the little customs man. "Rocks made while you wait! They're made out of this canvas, like stage boulders. Moreover, these ingenious rascals make a rock on a collapsible frame. When wanted the frame work can be expanded, and a life-like looking rock can be dropped overboard astern, right in the path of a pursuing craft."

As Davis spoke, he picked up a flat-folded affair. It was some six feet in length, perhaps five feet wide and some eighteen inches thick.

As well as they could in the cramped quarters of the little shop the three prowlers wonderingly unfolded the canvas, scene-painted, "property rock."

"It's hollow inside like a box," Tom muttered. "Yet it will slowly, gradually fill with water and sink, after it has done its work of scaring the life out of the skipper of the pursuing boat. The 'rock' that we ran over in Twin Island Channel, was smashed so badly by our keel that it sank very quickly. Hank, are you beginning to understand your bogey?"

"I'll never believe in ghosts, or in anything connected with superstition after this," Butts declared, blinking solemnly. "Yet how about my bogey chills?"

"I don't know," Tom laughed. "Your bogey chill isn't anything that we can run down and get a look at. But now I want to find out about the trick of driving a boat through what looks like a solid cliff."

"More scene painting, I guess," surmised Jim Davis.

Before leaving the three carefully refolded the scenery rock, and also took pains to leave everything in the shop as they had found it. Then out into the storm they went again, Davis carrying the lantern, but with the illumining slide closed.

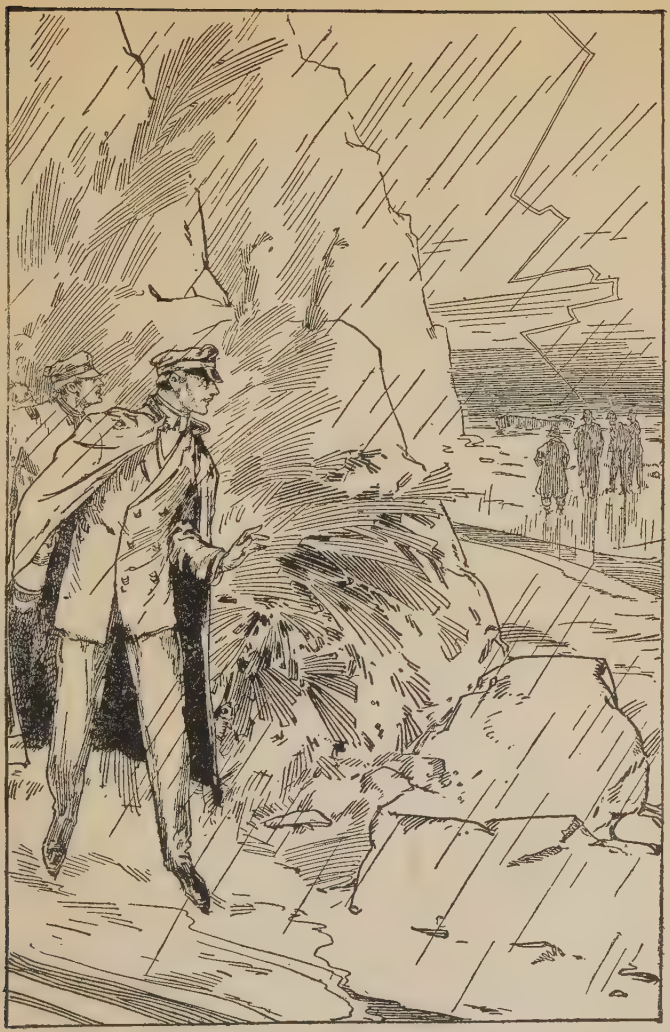
"Run, Hank! Scoot!" Skipper Halstead suddenly advised. "There's a single, ghostly eye heading this way. We shall be discovered!"

There wasn't anything at all ghostly about the light, as all three at once understood. The light was real, proceeding, undoubtedly, from a lantern. It was now moving, about half way between the little hidden cove and the Phillips's bungalow.

"Someone coming," Tom continued. "We'd better duck out of this—or wait!"

"I'm going to wait," Davis replied quietly. "I want to see every move in this rascally game."

Moving swiftly, before the bearer of the lantern had had time to get much closer, the three



They Slipped Behind a Small Boulder Near the Beach.

found a small boulder near the beach. Behind this they slipped.

Four men soon after reached the beach. The first of them was Carroll Phillips, the second Crane. The two remaining men looked more like sea-faring men.

"A fearful night, this," muttered Crane.

"The storm has almost passed," replied one of the unknown men. "Twenty minutes more, and we're likely to see the stars out. The late night will likely be clearer than the evening was."

Even now the rain was slacking down to a drizzle.

"I hope we don't meet that accursed 'Swiftsure,'" growled Phillips. "That craft, and her skipper, have been our bane. But for that fellow Halstead we wouldn't be down to our last chance."

"This surely is our last chance," groaned Crane. "Six hundred thousand dollars' worth of gems seized by Halstead! The profit on those gems, had we gotten them safely into the United States, would have made big money for us. And the gems would be in the United States now, Phillips, if you had not told me to take them back to the 'Swiftsure' until you were sure that the customs men were off your trail."

"It was a big loss," admitted Phillips, "but it can't be helped now. We are playing our last stake to-night, and for the next thirty or forty hours. We have two hundred thousand dollars' worth of gems now with us. If these fall into the hands of the American customs men we are ruined for good and all. But, if we get them into the States, we shall have a profit of more than a hundred thousand dollars. Three hundred thousand dollars, then, to begin new operations with! Why, with a year of careful work we can be rich men! Two years will see us millionaires—if we're not bothered by Halstead!"

"I'm going to take care of Halstead!" declared Crane hoarsely. "He has a new man in his crew—a hot-blooded young fellow he has knocked down and abused. That man, Davis, will stick a knife through Halstead, unless I'm mistaken. And I'll egg Davis on!"

"Look out what you do, Crane," spoke Phillips warningly. "From the little I saw I believe that Davis's enmity is all framed up. He and Halstead are working together to fool you. I'd have had the gems away from Halstead at Cusick's, if that little sailor man hadn't jumped so fast to the rescue."

"Mr. Phillips," spoke up one of the unknown men, "I'm free to tell you that I don't like the

plan of running through the lakes to Buffalo. You will run us into customs men there."

"Your boat, here, is of American register, isn't it?" demanded Carroll Phillips.

"Of course."

"And you're an American citizen, with a right to take your boat anywhere on the American coast, aren't you, Captain Haynes?"

"Certainly."

"All I told you, Captain, was to steer for Buffalo," Phillips went on. "But, as a matter of fact, we'll land somewhere this side of Buffalo, at some point where there's not as much as a farmhouse in sight. Trust to me! I never would have had Crane take the last lot of gems to Chicago, only I never dreamed that the customs people would think of going after an innocent American yacht like the 'Swiftsure.' This time, however, we won't fail to land our gems safely."

Mr. Phillips followed with more instructions to Captain Haynes as to the sailing course.

"And now get aboard, and let's get away from here," Phillips continued impatiently. "Show no lights until we've left Penman's Island a dozen miles astern. Crane, you get forward and lift the inner door of the arch."

The "Flying Dutchman" was soon under headway, and moving slowly across the cove.

From behind the boulder the watchers, on account of the darkness, had to depend largely upon their hearing, but they soon understood the secret of the sailing through the face of the cliff.

Through this cliff ran a low, natural arch, just about big enough to permit the passage of the small motor boat.

Over the inner end of the arch hung a neatly fitting wooden door, carefully painted to resemble the natural rock of the cliff.

This, under Crane's handling, moved upward, actuated by a nicely hung set of pulleys and weights. Doubtless the outer end of this archway through the cliff was likewise protected.

All was still once more around the little cove. The "Flying Dutchman" was doubtless on her way.

Tom Halstead glanced at his watch, with the aid of a lighted match.

"Quarter past one," he murmured. "Fellows, it will pay us to get our small boat launched as quickly as possible. Ted Dyer is due back with the 'Swiftsure' in forty-five minutes."

By the time the three in the small boat reached Twin Island Channel the "Flying Dutchman" had covered so much distance that the sound of her engine could not be heard.

On time almost to the minute Ted Dyer rang down the speed and took aboard his young captain and the others.

"Now, it's hustle from the present moment!" throbbed Tom Halstead, springing to the "Swiftsure's" bridge while the others hauled the boat to its davits. As soon as all was secure at the davits Tom rang the bell for slow speed ahead. By degrees he increased the speed until, on leaving the channel, the boat was going at a gait of thirty miles an hour.

Not much later he ran in at the little bay of Penman's Island. Tom himself went ashore in the boat, and up to the big house, where he roused Mr. Potter, explaining the situation.

"Good enough," nodded Mr. Potter. "If you can help the American government—yours and mine—then do so and bring the boat back when you can."

Captain Halstead waited to hear no more, but made all speed back to the "Swiftsure." In another minute he was heading southward through Georgian Bay.

Though he ran with lights, Captain Halstead did not once switch on his searchlight. No warning was to be sent ahead to the "Flying Dutchman."

Hank was sent to the engine room. Joe and Ted went to their bunks for sleep. Captain

Halstead, on the bridge, kept awake and keen-eyed, as though he never needed sleep. Jim Davis dozed in a deck chair.

Through what was left of the night Tom ran the craft at thirty miles an hour. Before morning he was on the waters of Lake Huron.

"Out of the jurisdiction of Canada!" cried Jim Davis, leaping up, wide awake, as the morning sunlight made him open his eyes. "Now, Captain Halstead, this is an American revenue cutter, made so for the time being by my presence on board. Have you sighted the 'Flying Dutchman' yet?"

"Not yet," Halstead answered. "But another hour ought to give us a glimpse of the 'F. D.' Captain Haynes must be using about all his speed—or else he has changed his course."

The latter possibility made both feel a bit blank. If the "Flying Dutchman" had taken another course than that planned in the cove she would have a splendid chance to escape from this late pursuit.

Jim Davis came up on the bridge, keeping the marine glasses to his eyes most of the time.

"You need sea-trained eyes," laughed Tom, half an hour later. "My unaided eyes appear to be better than yours with the help of the glass. Look a point and a half off the starboard bow, and tell me what you see."

"A speck on the horizon," replied Davis presently. "Can you make out more."

"No; but it's a moving craft," Tom returned. "Fifteen minutes more ought to give us a fine view."

Just eleven minutes later the pair on the bridge knew that they had sighted the "F. D."

"Have they seen us yet, do you think?" asked Davis.

"Impossible to say," replied Tom, with a shake of his head. "Davis, will you be good enough to go below and shake Joe and Ted until they tumble out of their bunks and get into their clothes?"

Two minutes later Ted Dyer relieved Halstead at the wheel. Joe Dawson was back at his post in the engine room.

"Now, Joe, give us the 'Swiftsure's' full speed, if you think the engines will stand it," Tom called down into the engine room.

"They'll have to stand it," was Dawson's quiet answer.

Tom had no need of the bridge now. He could make out the chase from the deck. Plainly those aboard the "Flying Dutchman" realized the pursuit, and were crowding that little motor craft for all she was worth.

"It won't do them any good, though," laughed Davis gleefully.

"Won't it?" asked Tom suddenly. "See that? They're turning almost due north! If they reach the Canadian shore ahead of us they can turn around and laugh at us!"

Four bounds carried Tom Halstead to the bridge, his hands once more on the spokes of the wheel.

"Joe, still a little more speed, if you can get it!" the young skipper bellowed down.

In the next half hour Joe Dawson proved what kind of engineer he was. The "Swiftsure" made such speed as she had never shown, even on her trial trip. She seemed almost to rise out of the water and to fly through the air.

Captain Haynes tried to get much more speed out of his little boat. Apparently he overstrained his engine, for presently the "F. D." was running at decreased speed again.

"You've a revolver aboard?" shouted up Jim Davis.

"A revolver and a rifle in the owner's stateroom," Tom called down. "Ted, come to me and get the key. Then bring the weapons out."

These were quickly on deck.

"Can you shoot?" called up the little customs man.

"If I have to," Tom Halstead replied. "But I'd rather you did all that sort of thing."

Five minutes later the "Swiftsure" ran along-

side the "Flying Dutchman." Nor had the race been won any too soon, for the "F. D." was now within four miles of the Canadian shore.

Jim Davis had pinned on a badge of the United States Customs Service. Now he raised the rifle to his shoulder, covering Captain Haynes, who sat at the wheel of his little craft.

"In the name of the United States Customs Service," bawled Jim Davis, "I order you, Captain Haynes, to lay to and let us come aboard!"

Were the four desperate men on the smaller motor craft armed? If so, would they offer a fight to the finish?

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

"WHAT do you expect to find here?" called back Captain Haynes in pretended astonishment.

"I expect to find two or three dead bodies aboard your boat, Captain Haynes, if you don't shut off your speed instantly," Davis called back sternly. "Don't think you can stall me along until you get your boat into Canadian waters. Shut off speed at once—or take consequences!"

Haynes made no further effort at that kind

of trick. A bell sounded aboard the "Flying Dutchman," then another, and the craft soon drifted without headway.

Only Haynes was in sight. Undoubtedly the other three men were under the deckhouse. Did they plan an ambush and a fight when the boarding was carried out?

"Lay alongside, Captain Halstead," ordered Jim Davis steadily. "Have Mr. Dyer at the wheel, so that you can go aboard with me."

"I want to go, too," spoke up Hank.

"All right," nodded Tom.

It was not an easy task to bring the two boats together without injury to one another, but Halstead's skill accomplished the feat.

Jim Davis, with the rifle at his shoulder, and the revolver in a pocket, leaped aboard the smaller craft. Tom, an iron bar in his right hand, followed. Then came Hank Butts.

"Turn those fellows out of the cabin, Halstead!" directed Davis, who was now in command. "Captain Haynes, oblige me by stepping on board the 'Swiftsure.' "

Tom looked in at the cabin door. As he did so Carroll Phillips wrenched the bar out of the young skipper's hand. Then Crane, with a cry of uncontrollable rage, leaped at Tom, a knife in his right hand.

Crane's leap, however, fell short. From

under his coat Hank's iron hitching weight seemed fairly to leap or fly. It fell on Crane's sound foot.

"Drop that bar, Phillips, and get up on the other deck," ordered Davis, in a tone that permitted of no disobedience.

The fourth man of the prize, who was the engineer, went aboard the "Swiftsure" without thought of resistance.

Davis followed them, ordering them into the cabin. Here he had Hank search them, but without effect.

In the meantime Tom had busied himself making the "Flying Dutchman" fast to the larger craft.

Now the searchers returned to the smaller motor boat. It required a full hour of steady searching ere a case was found containing this latest shipment of gems to be smuggled into the United States.

"Take the 'Flying Dutchman' in tow, Captain Halstead," directed Jim Davis. "Then hit out for the nearest railway town on the United States side."

The prisoners, being locked in the cabin, gave Davis no further concern for the present.

* * * * * * * *

Shortly after ten o'clock the following morning the "Swiftsure" came flying back to Pen-

man's Island and dropped anchor in the little bay.

Henry Potter was at the little landing dock to receive Captain Tom. He demanded the news of the cruise and received it.

"I am glad that the boat did one good service before it passed out of my control," remarked the speculator, with a sigh.

"You have gone under in the market, sir?" asked Tom Halstead, with swift sympathy.

"Not when the last telegram was sent," replied Henry Potter, with a wan smile. "But I shall be glad when the worst comes. It's only a question of two or three days now. Can you get enough sleep to-day and be prepared to have me in Chicago by midnight to-morrow?"

"We can start in ten minutes, if you wish, sir," was the quick reply.

"No; I don't want to kill such a willing crew as you young men make. By the way, I have three or four telegrams for you, Halstead. I paid the charges."

"They're from the hospital at Laketon," Tom said shame-facedly, after he had opened them. "Poor Hawkesleigh. With all the excitement I've had I'm ashamed to admit that I've about forgotten him of late. The poor fellow is still alive, and the doctors may pull him through, but they decline to offer much hope at that."

At midnight the "Swiftsure" pulled out. The next day Henry Potter paced the deck for hours, such was his feverish unrest.

After the boat was tied up at Chicago, Mrs. Potter prevailed upon her husband to stay aboard through the night. In the morning, however, he hurried ashore. Mrs. Potter decided to remain aboard.

Late in the afternoon of that day Mr. Potter returned haggard, and walking like a drunken man, though he never used liquors.

"It's all as good as over, Helen," he told his wife falteringly as soon as he came aboard. "By noon to-morrow I'll be wiped off the board! My fortune will be gone. Two million dollars would have pulled me through. The market will speedily rise now. How selfish the world is, Helen! Often I have helped friends through strains such as I'm enduring now. Yet, when I went to see these men to-day to beg assistance, they all had excuses and sympathy for me, but none had money to offer."

"Perhaps, Henry," replied Mrs. Potter, "in your anxiety and unrest you've overlooked some of your best friends. Show me, this evening, that two millions will pull you through, and I'll go ashore in the morning and raise the money."

"You?" asked her husband incredulously.

"Yes; but on a very strict promise from you

that, if you come through this threatened disaster safely you'll never speculate again. Do you promise?''

''How could I do otherwise?'' demanded Mr. Potter.

''Then you do promise?''

''Yes. But you can't raise the money, Helen. Not a friend in Chicago—or those whom I called friends—will risk a dollar on me now.''

''Turn your deals all over to me in the morning,'' said Mrs. Potter calmly, ''and I feel certain that I can pull you through. But never forget the promise you've just made.''

In the morning husband and wife went ashore together. At four o'clock they returned to the yacht.

''I guess we're safe, Captain Halstead,'' smiled Mrs. Potter. ''I found the two millions.''

''And that will pull Mr. Potter through?''

''Yes; I think so. By two this afternoon the market began to rally. The evening papers predict that we are at the beginning of one of the biggest bull markets in our financial history. Mr. Potter would have been closed out at eleven this morning. But I found the money needed to tide him over until the turn came. Where do you suppose, Captain, I raised the money?''

''I haven't the least idea,'' Skipper Tom confessed.

"At my bankers," laughed Mrs. Potter. "To raise the money all I had to do was to sign checks. Henry Potter, like all speculators and gamblers, has always been generous with his wife. For years he has been remembering me handsomely whenever he made a heavy stake in the market. Fearing that such a day as this might come, I have always saved the money he has given me. He is now through safely, beyond a doubt, and I have his word that he will never speculate again."

"Mr. Potter will keep his word," Tom added.

"As always," Mrs. Potter continued.

* * * * * * * *

Three days later the owner of the "Swiftsure" knew that he was richer, by a few more millions. He drew his money out of the market, and has kept it out ever since.

The rest of the summer he decided to spend largely in cruising on his handsome, speedy boat.

The four men captured aboard the "Flying Dutchman" are all now serving terms of imprisonment in a Federal prison. At the time of his trial Crane admitted that the servants' cottage had been destroyed by dynamite, exploded by an accidental fire. The dynamite had been secretly stored in the cottage for the possible making of a marine mine to be used against revenue cutter pursuit.

Hawkesleigh lay for weeks between life and death, but at last recovered and reëntered Mr. Potter's employ. How he met his injury he did not know, and this mystery was never explained. Crane must have assaulted him.

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